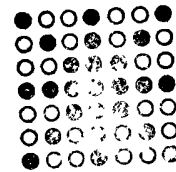


# Better English Pronunciation

Second edition

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## Foreword

ɔ:	fall	ɔ:
u	full	ʊ
u:	fool	u:
ei	fail	ei
ou	foal	əʊ
ai	file	aɪ
au	foul	aʊ
ɔi	foil	ɔɪ
æ	cat	æ
ɔ	cot	ɒ
ʌ	cut	ʌ
ə:	curt	ɜ:
ɑ:	cart	ɑ:
iə	tier	ɪə
ɛə	tear	eə
ʊə	tour	ʊə
ə	banana	ə

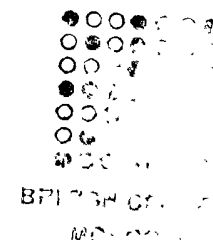
Vowels which were previously differentiated only by the length mark (: ) are now distinguished both by the length mark and by letter-shape, e.g. fi:l/fɪl. This makes for easier visual recognition and underlines the fact that the pairs of vowels differ not only in length but also in quality.

A recording of all the practice material is available on cassettes. The symbol  in the text indicates exactly what is recorded.

The book has been entirely re-designed and re-set, and the diagrams have been re-drawn; for this and much other help my thanks are due to the Cambridge University Press.

I hope that my book will continue to serve a useful purpose for both teachers and learners of English in helping them towards a better English pronunciation.

## 1 Problems in pronunciation



### 1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this book is very simple: to help you, the reader, to pronounce English better than you do now. Millions of foreign students want to learn English as well as they can; for some it is only a matter of reading and writing it, and they will find no help here. But many students want to be able to speak English well, with a pronunciation which can be easily understood both by their fellow-students and by English people, and it is for them that this book is specially intended.

Written English and spoken English are obviously very different things. Writing consists of marks on paper which make no noise and are taken in by the eye, whilst speaking is organized sound, taken in by the ear. How can a book, which is nothing but marks on paper, help anyone to make their English *sound* better? The answer to this is that it can't, not by itself. But if you will co-operate, and listen to English as much as you can, along the lines that I shall suggest to you, then you will find that the instructions given in the following pages will make your ears sharper for the sound of English and when you can *hear* English properly you can go on and improve your performance.

Language starts with the ear. When a baby starts to talk he does it by hearing the sounds his mother makes and imitating them. If a baby is born deaf he cannot hear these sounds and therefore cannot imitate them and will not speak. But normal babies can hear and can imitate; they are wonderful imitators, and this gift of imitation, which gives us the gift of speech, lasts for a number of years. It is well known that a child of ten years old or less can learn *any* language perfectly, if it is brought up surrounded by that language, no matter where it was born or who its parents were. But after this age the ability to imitate perfectly becomes less, and we all know only too well that adults have great difficulty in mastering the pronunciation (as well as other parts) of foreign languages. Some people are more talented than others; they find pronouncing other languages less difficult, but they never find them easy. Why is this? Why should this gift that we all have as

children disappear in later life? Why can't grown-up people pick up the characteristic sound of a foreign language as a child can?

The answer to this is that our native language won't let us. By the time we are grown up the habits of our own language are so strong that they are very difficult to break. In our own language we have a fairly small number of sound-units which we put together in many different combinations to form the words and sentences we use every day. And as we get older we are dominated by this small number of units. It is as if we had in our heads a certain fixed number of boxes for sounds; when we listen to our own language we hear the sounds and we put each into the right box, and when we speak we go to the boxes and take out the sounds we want in the order we want them. And as we do this over the years the boxes get stronger and stronger until everything we hear, whether it is our own language or another, has to be put into one of these boxes, and everything we say comes out of one of them. But every language has a different number of boxes, and the boxes are arranged differently. For example, three of our English boxes contain the sounds at the beginning of the words *fin*, *thin* and *sin*, that is, *f*, *th* (this is one sound, of course) and *s*. Like this:

f	th	s
---	----	---

Now, many other languages have boxes which are similar to the English ones for *f* and *s*, but they do not have a special box for the *th*-sound. And we can picture this in the following way:

f	th	s
f	s	

When the foreign listener hears the English *th*-sound he has to put it in one of his own boxes, his habits force him to do so, and he has no special *th* box, so he puts it into either the *f* box or the *s* box:

f	th	s
f	s	

In other words, he 'hears' the *th*-sound as either *f* or *s*; a funny *f* or a funny *s*, no doubt, but he has nowhere else to put it. And in speaking the same thing happens: if he has to say *thin*, he has no *th* box to go to so he goes to the nearest box available to him, either the *f* or the *s*, and

he says either *fin* or *sin* (or it may be *tin*, if he has a *t* box in his language).

The main problem of English pronunciation is to build a new set of boxes corresponding to the sounds of English, and to break down the arrangement of boxes which the habits of our native language have so strongly built up. We do this by establishing new ways of hearing, new ways of using our speech organs, new speech habits.

This may sound easy, but it isn't. Unfortunately, it is never easy to establish good habits, it is always the bad ones which come most naturally, and you will need to do a great deal of hard work if you want to build yourself a set of English boxes which are nearly as firm as those of your own language. Anyone who says that you can get a good English pronunciation without hard work is talking rubbish, unless you happen to be one of the very small number of lucky people to whom pronunciation comes fairly easily. Most of us need to work hard at it, and this book is for people who are prepared to work hard. If you work hard and regularly along the lines suggested in this book, you will improve. One of the most important things to remember is that *every-one can improve*, even if they have no great talent for language. Quite apart from anything else, there is great satisfaction to be got from the development of what talent you have. You may never sound like a native English speaker, but at least you will have got as close to it as you can.

## 1.2 'Lend me your ears'

If speech depends on hearing, and books don't talk, what are you to do? Fortunately there is a lot of English spoken about the world. On films, on the radio, on tapes, on gramophone records; most people can get the opportunity of listening to English in some way, and this is what you must do. *You must hear English*. But just hearing it is not enough; you must listen to it, and you must listen to it not for the meaning but for the sound of it. Obviously when you are listening to a radio programme you will be trying to understand it, trying to get the meaning from it; but you must try also for at least a short part of the time to forget about what the words mean and to listen to them simply as sounds. Take one of the English sounds at a time, it might be the English *t*, and listen for it each time it comes; concentrate on catching it, on picking it out, on hearing what it sounds like. Don't just be satisfied to hear it vaguely, as if it were a sound of your own language; try and pick out the Englishness of it, what makes it different from the nearest sound in your language. And when you think you have got it,

then say it in some of the words that you have heard, and say it *aloud*. It is no use practising silently; all of us are much better at pronouncing if we do it silently, inside ourselves. But you can't talk English inside yourself, it has to come out, so practise aloud, even if it puzzles your family or your friends. Later in the book you will find pronunciation exercises to be done; these too must be done aloud.

Films or radio programmes have the disadvantage that you can't stop them and ask for something to be repeated. Gramophone records and tapes do not have this disadvantage. With them you can repeat any part of the text as often as you need, and you must do this: it is much better for your ear if you listen to the same passage six times than if you listen to six different passages; but be careful listen closely each time, don't relax after two or three hearings, try to keep your ears as closely concentrated on the sound of the passage at the sixth hearing as at the first. In this way you will build up a store of sound-memory which will form a firm base for your performance.

Now, performance. When you practise (aloud, of course), you must listen carefully and accurately. If you have listened properly in the first place you will know what the English words and sentences sound like, and you must compare as closely as you can the sounds that come out of your mouth with the sounds that you are holding in your head, in your sound-memory. Don't be satisfied too easily, try to match your sounds exactly with the sounds that you have listened to.

Some of you may be able to make use of a tape-recorder; if you can, you will be able to hear what you sound like to other people and this is very helpful. If you can, record on the tape-recorder a sentence or a longer passage with which you are familiar through hearing it said by an English speaker. Then listen to it, closely and carefully, and see where your performance does not match the original; mark the places where you are dissatisfied, and practise these bits until you think you have them right; then record the passage, listen critically again, and repeat the sequence. One word of warning a tape-recorder will not do the job for you; it is a useful instrument, but it is not a magic wand which will make your English perfect without any effort from you. It is useful only because it enables you to listen to yourself from the outside, which makes it easier for you to hear what is wrong, but it is you who have to put it right, and the machine cannot do this for you. In the end it is absolutely essential for you to be able to match what you say with your sound-memory of English. So although a tape-recorder is helpful, this does not mean that if you haven't got one your English will not improve, and, just as important, it does not mean that

if you have a tape-recorder your English will necessarily be better. Careful listening is the most important thing; and careful matching of performance with listening will bring you nearer to the ideal of a perfect English pronunciation. And make no mistake, your aim must be to acquire a perfect English pronunciation. You will almost certainly not succeed in this aim because it requires, as I have said, a very rare gift; but unless this is your aim you will not make all the progress of which you are capable; keep working towards perfection until you are quite sure that it is neither necessary nor profitable for you to continue. Then you will have done yourself justice.

### 1.3 Which English?

What do we mean by a perfect English pronunciation? In one sense there are as many different kinds of English as there are speakers of it; no two people speak exactly alike we can always hear differences between them and the pronunciation of English varies a great deal in different geographical areas. How do we decide what sort of English to use as a model? This is not a question which can be decided in the same way for all foreign learners of English. If you live in a part of the world like India or West Africa, where there is a tradition of speaking English for general communication purposes, you should aim to acquire a good variety of the pronunciation of this area; such varieties of Indian English or African English and the like are to be respected and used as a model by all those who will need their English mainly for the purpose of communication with their fellows in these areas. It would be a mistake in these circumstances to use as a model B.B.C. English or anything of the sort.

On the other hand, if you live in an area where there is no traditional use of English and no body of people who speak it for general communication purposes, then you must take as your model some form of native English pronunciation, and which form you choose does not very much matter. The most sensible thing to do is to take as your model the sort of English which you can hear most often. If you have gramophone records of English speech based on, let us say, an American pronunciation, make American your model; if you can listen regularly to the B.B.C., use that kind of English. But whatever you choose to do, remember this: all these different accents of English have a great deal in common, they have far more similarities than differences, so don't worry too much what sort of English you are listening to provided it is English.

In this book I cannot describe all the possible pronunciations of English that might be useful to you so I shall concentrate on one, the sort of English used by educated native speakers in south-east England, often referred to as Received Pronunciation (R.P. for short), that is 'accepted' pronunciation. R.P. will be the basis; but I am less interested in making you speak with this particular accent of English than in helping you to make the necessary differences between the basic sounds which are found in all kinds of English: these are found in R.P. and because of this it is as useful to describe R.P. as to describe any other native pronunciation, and if you really want to speak with a British accent, then this is as good as any, in the sense that it is widely acceptable.

#### 1.4 The basic sounds

The sounds at the beginning of each of the words in the following list are all different: the letters which stand for these sounds (usually one letter per sound, but sometimes two) are printed in *italic type*:

<i>pie</i> r	<i>vee</i> r	<i>nee</i> r
<i>bee</i> r	<i>shee</i> r	<i>wee</i> r
<i>tee</i> r	<i>hee</i> r	<i>yee</i> r
<i>dee</i> r	<i>lee</i> r	<i>chee</i> r
<i>gee</i> r	<i>ree</i> r	<i>jee</i> r
<i>fear</i>	<i>mere</i>	

It is the sound at the beginning of the word, the initial sound, which makes one word different from all the other words in the list. Since this is so, since these sounds are *distinctive*, it is obviously necessary to be able to make them sound different: they are basic sounds of English all kinds of English. So are the sounds of the letters in *italic type* in these lists:

<i>base</i>	<i>wra</i> th
<i>baize</i>	<i>wro</i> ng
<i>bathe</i>	
<i>beige</i>	
<i>bake</i>	

In these lists the sounds at the end of the word are distinctive, the final sounds. If you count up the sounds which are distinctive in initial

#### The basic sounds

position and those which are distinctive in final position you will find that there are twenty-four altogether. These twenty-four sounds which occur initially and finally, though they occur in other positions too, are called *consonants*.

Now look at these lists:

<i>fee</i> l	<i>ca</i> t	<i>tee</i> r
<i>fi</i> ll	<i>co</i> t	<i>tee</i> r
<i>fe</i> ll	<i>cu</i> t	<i>tee</i> r
<i>fa</i> ll	<i>cu</i> rt	
<i>fu</i> ll	<i>ca</i> rt	
<i>fo</i> ol		
<i>fa</i> il		
<i>fo</i> al		
<i>fi</i> le		
<i>fo</i> ul		
<i>fo</i> il		

Most of these sounds, represented again by letters in *italic type*, occur surrounded by consonants, and this is typical, although most of them can also occur initially and finally too. These sounds are called *vowels*.

#### NOTICE


- Five of these words, *cu*rt, *ca*rt, *tee*r, *tee*r, *tee*r, have a letter *r* in them. In many English accents, e.g. American, Canadian, Scottish, Irish, this would be pronounced exactly like the consonant at the beginning of *re*d, but in R.P. and various other accents the letter represents part of a basic vowel unit. There is more detail about this on p. 61.
- There is one other vowel, making twenty in all, which occurs in the word *ba*na*na*. This is a very special and very important vowel in English and it is discussed in full on pp. 82-4.

#### 1.5 Letters and sounds

These must never be mixed up. Letters are written, sounds are spoken. It is very useful to have written letters to remind us of corresponding sounds, but this is all they do; they cannot make us pronounce sounds which we do not already know; they simply remind us. In ordinary English spelling it is not always easy to know what sounds the letters stand for; for example, in the words *ci*ty, *bu*sy, *wome*n, *pre*tt*y*, *vi*llage, the letters *i*, *y*, *u*, *o*, *e* and *a* all stand for the *same* vowel sound, the one which occurs in *si*t. And in *ba*na*na*, *ba*ther, *ma*n, *ma*ny the letter *a* stands

for five different vowel sounds. In a book which is dealing with pronunciation this is inconvenient; it would be much more useful if the reader could always be certain that one letter represented one and only one sound, that when he saw a letter he would know at once how to pronounce it (or at least what to aim at!). That is why it is helpful to use letters in a consistent way when dealing with English. We have twenty-four consonants and twenty vowels to consider and we give to each of these forty-four units a letter (or sometimes two letters, if this is convenient). In that way we can show without any doubt what the student should be trying to say.

Here again are the words listed on pp. 6–7 and this time beside each word is the letter of the International Phonetic Alphabet which will *always* be used to represent the sound to which that word is the key, however it may be spelt in other words. Most of the letters will be perfectly familiar to you, others will seem strange for a little while; but not for long.

 pier /p/	fear /f/	rear /r/	cheer /tʃ/
beer /b/	veer /v/	mere /m/	jeer /dʒ/
tier /t/	sheer /ʃ/	near /n/	
deer /d/	hear /h/	weir /w/	
gear /g/	leer /l/	year /j/	
base /s/	wrath /θ/		
baize /z/	wrong /ŋ/		
bathe /ð/			
beige /ʒ/			
bake /k/			
feel /i:/	fail /eɪ/	cat /æ/	tier /ɪə/
fill /ɪ/	foal /əʊ/	cot /ɒ/	tear /eə/
fell /e/	file /aɪ/	cut /ʌ/	tour /tʊə/
fall /ɔ:/	foul /aʊ/	curt /ɜ:/	
full /ʊ/	foil /ɔɪ/	cart /ɑ:/	banana /ə/
fool /u:/			

The use of the colon (:) with the vowels /i:/, ɔ:/, u:/, a:/, ɜ:/ is to show that they are in general *longer* than /ɪ, ʊ/ etc. They are also different in their actual sound, as the different letters indicate.

Here are some examples of words written in this way: *city* sɪtɪ, *busy* bɪzɪ, *women* wɪmɪn, *banana* bənə:nə, *bather* beɪðə, *man* mæn, *many* menɪ, *wrong* rɒŋ, *change* tʃeɪndʒ, *house* haʊs, *thought* θɔ:t, *could* kʊd, *cough* kɒf, *rough* rʌf, *though* ðəʊ.

This way of writing or transcribing makes it possible to show that some words which are ordinarily spelt in the same way sound different; for example, *lead*, which is pronounced lɪ:d in a phrase like *lead the way*, but *led* in *lead pipe*. It also makes clear that some words which are spelt differently sound the same, for example, *rain*, *rein*, *reign*, which are all pronounced reɪn.

## 1.6 Sounds and sound-groups

A sound is made by definite movements of the organs of speech, and if those movements are exactly repeated the result will always be the same sound; it is easy to show that there are more than forty-four sounds in English even in the pronunciation of a single person, without worrying about differences between people. For instance, if you say *tea* and *two* tɪ:, tu: you will notice that the lips are in a rather flat shape for tɪ: but are made rounder for tu:, and this is true for both the consonant /t/ and for the two vowels. So the organs of speech are not making *exactly* the same movements for the /t/ of *tea* and the /t/ of *two*, and therefore the resulting sounds are not exactly the same. You can prove this to yourself by only saying the consonant sounds of these words: think of the word *tea* and pronounce the beginning of it but not the vowel. Then do the same for *two*; think of the word but stop before the vowel: you can hear and feel that the two sounds are different. Obviously most of the movements we make when pronouncing these two sounds are the same, and they therefore sound alike, but not identical.

Take another example, /h/. When we pronounce the words *he*, *hat*, *who* hi:, hæʔ, hu:, the /h/-sounds are different: in pronouncing /h/ we put our mouth into the position needed for the following vowel and then push out air through this position, but since the three different vowels have three different mouth-positions it follows that the three /h/-sounds must also be different. You can prove this again, as with the /t/-sounds, by saying the beginnings of these words whilst only thinking the rest.

Each of the letters we use to show pronunciation may stand for more than one sound; but each of the sounds represented by one letter has a great deal of similarity to the other sounds represented by the same letter; they have more similarities than differences: none of the /h/-sounds could be mistaken for an /l/- or an /s/-sound, and none of the /t/-sounds can be confused with a /p/- or a /k/-sound.

These groups of sounds, each represented by one letter of the

phonetic alphabet, are called *phonemes*, and the method of representing each phoneme by one symbol is called *phonemic transcription*. Phonemic transcription may be enclosed in diagonal lines / . . . . ./. It is necessary to distinguish carefully between phonemes and sounds: the 44 phonemes of English are the basic contrasts which make it possible for us to keep each word or longer utterance separate from every other, *fi:l* from *fil* and *pɪə* from *bɪə*, etc. But each phoneme may be represented by different sounds in different positions, so the different /t/-sounds in *tea* and *two* both represent the /t/ phoneme, and the three /h/-sounds in *he*, *hat*, *who* all represent the single /h/ phoneme.

This suggests two stages in the learning of pronunciation: the first is to be able to produce 44 vowels and consonants which are different, so that the words and longer utterances of English do not at any rate sound the same, so that *fi:l* and *fil* sound different. At this stage the learner will not worry about which of the possible /h/-sounds he is using; any of them will serve to distinguish *heat* *hi:t* from *eat* *i:t*. If the common feature of each phoneme is reproduced, all the necessary distinctions of words, etc., can be made. But obviously if the learner uses a particular sound in a word where an English speaker uses a different sound belonging to the same phoneme, the effect will be odd; he will not be misunderstood – that could only happen if he used a sound belonging to a different phoneme – but he will not be performing in an English way, and if this happens with many of the phonemes it will contribute to a foreign accent. So the second stage in learning pronunciation must be to learn to use as many different sounds as is necessary to represent a particular phoneme. In theory a single phoneme is represented by a different sound in every different position in which it occurs, but most of these differences will be made automatically by the learner without instruction. It is only in cases where this is unlikely to happen that it will be necessary to worry about particular sounds within a phoneme.

There is one other relation between sound and phoneme which is likely to give trouble. Here is an example: in English /d/ and /ð/ are different phonemes; in Spanish there are sounds which are similar to those used in English to represent these phonemes – we can write them /d/ and /ð/; but in Spanish these two sounds belong to the *same* phoneme – when the phoneme occurs between vowels it is represented by /ð/, as in *nada* ‘nothing’, but when it occurs in initial position it is represented by /d/, as in *dos* ‘two’. This will cause difficulty for the Spanish speaker because although he has more or less the same sounds as in English he is not able to use them independently, and whenever

an English /d/ occurs between vowels he will be in danger of using /ð/, and confusing *breeding* *bri:diŋ* with *breathing* *bri:ðɪŋ*, and whenever English /ð/ occurs in initial position he will be in danger of using /d/, confusing *they* *ðei* and *day* *dei*. In general, if two sounds belong to one phoneme in your language, but to two different phonemes in English there will be danger of confusions until you have learnt to forget the habits of your language and use the sounds independently as in English. This can be done by careful listening and accurate use of the speech organs and a great deal of practice.

## 1.7 Words and utterances

Most of what I have said so far has been about the pronunciation of short pieces of speech, sounds or single words; it is necessary at first to be sure that the basic sounds of the language are being properly pronounced and the best way of doing that is to practise single words or very short phrases; but we do not talk in single words, and certainly not in single sounds. The sounds and words are connected together with others to make up longer utterances, and these longer utterances have special difficulties of their own.

First, they must be pronounced smoothly, without hesitations and without stumbling over the combinations of sounds. It may be quite easy to pronounce separately the words, *library*, *been*, *lately*, *you*, *to*, *the*, *have*, but it is much more difficult to pronounce the question *Have you been to the library lately?* without hesitating and without making mistakes.

Secondly, in a longer English utterance some of the words are treated as being more important to the meaning than others, and it is necessary to know which these words are and how they are treated in speech. And words which are not regarded as being particularly important often have a different pronunciation because of this; for example, the word *can* which is pronounced *kæn* if it is said by itself, is often pronounced *kən* in phrases like *You can have it* *ju: kən hæv ɪt*.

Thirdly, the rhythm of English must be mastered. That is, the different lengths which the syllables of English are given and the reasons why these different lengths occur. An example of this would be the following:

The c h a i r collapsed.  
The chairman collapsed.

The word *chair* has the same length as the word *chairman*, and therefore

each of the two syllables in *chairman* is shorter than the single syllable of *chair*, so that the *chair* of *chairman* is only half as long as the word *chair* by itself.

Fourthly, and last, the tune of the voice, the melody of speech is different in different languages and it is necessary to learn something of the English way of using tune. For example, when we say *thank you*, the voice may go from a higher note to a lower one, or it may go from a lower note to a higher one and these two different tunes show two different attitudes: higher to lower means sincere gratitude; lower to higher means that the matter is purely routine. To confuse the two would clearly be dangerous and it is necessary to learn what tunes there are in English and what they mean.

All these matters will be dealt with in the chapters which follow, and exercises will be given to help the reader to improve his performance at each stage. But the first important thing is to be sure that the basic sound-distinctions are right and this requires knowledge of the working of the speech organs; this is the subject of the second chapter.

## 1.8 Exercises

(Answers on p 134)

- 1 How many *phonemes* are there in the following words (the lists on p. 8 will help you here): *write, through, measure, six, half, where, one, first, voice, castle, scissors, should, judge, father, lamb*?
- 2 *Bear* and *bare* are spelt differently but pronounced the same, *beə*. Make a list of other words which are spelt differently but pronounced in the same way.
- 3 Write the words in Exercise 1 above in *phonemic* transcription, and then memorize the forty-four symbols needed to transcribe English phonemically so that you can do it without looking at the lists. Now transcribe the following words phonemically: *mat, met, meet, mate, might, cot, cut, caught, lick, look, bird, board, load, loud, boys, bars, bears, sheer, sure, copper, green, charge, song, five, with, truth, yellow, pleasure, hallo*.
- 4 Try to make lists like those on p. 8 for your language, and see how many phonemes it uses. For some languages this will be quite easy, for some it will be difficult; if you have difficulty in finding words which are different only in one phoneme, find words which are as similar as you can. An English example of this kind is *getting, cutting* (which shows that /g, k/ and /e, ʌ/ are different phonemes). What phonemes does the pair *mother, father* separate?

## 2 How the speech organs work in English

In all languages we speak with air from the lungs. We draw it into the lungs quickly and we release it slowly and then interfere with its passage in various ways and at various places. Figure 1 is a diagram showing a side view of the parts of the throat and mouth and nose which are important to recognize for English.

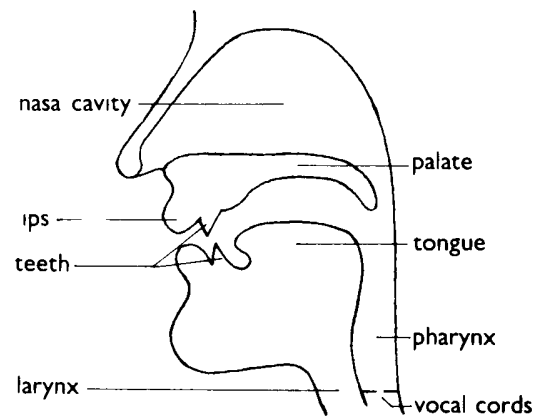


Fig. 1 The speech organs

### 2.1 The vocal cords

The air released by the lungs comes up through the wind-pipe and arrives first at the *larynx*. The larynx contains two small bands of elastic tissue, which can be thought of as two flat strips of rubber, lying opposite each other across the air passage. These are the vocal cords.

The inner edges of the vocal cords can be moved towards each other so that they meet and completely cover the top of the wind-pipe, or they can be drawn apart so that there is a gap between them (known as *the glottis*) through which the air can pass freely: this is their usual position when we breathe quietly in and out.

When the vocal cords are brought together tightly no air can pass



through them and if the lungs are pushing air from below this air is compressed. If the vocal cords are then opened suddenly the compressed air bursts out with a sort of coughing noise. Try this: open your mouth wide, hold your breath, imagine that you are picking up a heavy weight, holding it for two seconds, then dropping it and suddenly let your breath out. This holding back of the compressed air followed by a sudden release is called *the glottal stop*, and what you feel as the air bursts out is the vocal cords springing apart. Do this ten times, and get used to the feeling of the 'click' of the vocal cords as they release the air. The compression of the air may be very great, as when we do lift a heavy weight, or it may be quite slight, when the result is like a very gentle cough.

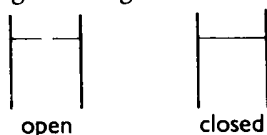


Fig. 2 The vocal cords

If the vocal cords are brought together quite gently, the air from the lungs will be able to force them apart for a moment, but then they will return to the closed position; then the air will force them apart again, and they will close again, and so on. This is a very rapid process and may take place as many as 800 times per second. It is obviously not possible to hear each individual 'click' of the opening vocal cords, and what we do hear is a musical note. The height of the note depends on the speed of opening and closing of the vocal cords; if they open and close very quickly the note will be high, if they open and close slowly the note will be low. The note, whether high or low, produced by this rapid opening and closing of the vocal cords is called *voice*.

Some of the English sounds have voice and some do not. Say a long /m/-sound and put your fingers on your neck by the side of the larynx. You will feel the vibration of the vocal cords. Now keep your lips closed still, but just breathe hard through your nose: no vibration. Repeat this several times, first /m/ then breathe through the nose, and get used to the feeling of voice and no voice. Now say the word *more* mɔː, still with your fingers on your neck. Does the vowel /ɔː/ have voice? Can you still feel the same vibration for /ɔː/ as for /m/? Yes, both sounds are voiced. Say a long /s/-sound. Is it voiced? No, it has no vibrations. Try other sounds of your own language and English and see which of them are voiced and which not.

The sounds which are not voiced *voiceless* sounds – are made with the vocal cords drawn apart so that the air can pass out freely between them and there is no vibration. The difference between voiced and voiceless can be used to distinguish between what are otherwise similar sounds. Say a long /s/-sound again, and in the middle of it turn the voice on: this will give you a /z/-sound, buzzing rather than hissing. But not all the voiced sounds of English have similar voiceless sounds, for example the voiceless /m/-sound which you made just now does not occur in English, and even when there are pairs of similar sounds which are voiced and voiceless this may not be the only difference between them, as we shall see later.

Immediately above the larynx is a space behind the tongue and reaching up towards the nasal cavity: this space is called *the pharynx* /fæɪŋks/.

## 2.2 The palate

The palate, as Figure 1 shows, forms the roof of the mouth and separates the mouth cavity from the nose (or nasal) cavity. Make the tip of your tongue touch as much of your own palate as you can: most of it is hard and fixed in position, but when your tongue-tip is as far back as it will go, away from your teeth, you will notice that the palate becomes soft. Figure 3 is a more detailed view of the palate.

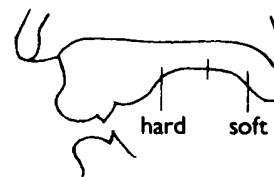


Fig. 3 The soft and hard parts of the palate

You can easily see the soft part of the palate if you use a mirror: turn your back to the light, open your mouth wide and say the vowel /aː/, and move the mirror so that the light shines into your mouth. You will be able to see the soft palate curving down towards the tongue and becoming narrower as it does so until it ends in a point called *the uvula* /juːvʊlə/. Behind the soft palate you will be able to see part of the back wall of the pharynx. The soft palate can move: it can be raised so that it makes a firm contact with the back wall of the pharynx (as in Figure 3), and this stops the breath from going up into the nasal cavity and forces

it to go into the mouth only. You can see this raising of the soft palate in your mirror if you keep your mouth wide open in position for the vowel /ɑ:/ and push out your breath very fast, as if you were trying to blow out a match, still with your mouth open wide. You will see the soft palate move quickly upwards so that the breath all comes out of the mouth and none of it goes up into the nasal cavity. And when you relax after this the soft palate will come down again into its lowered position, shown in Figure 4.

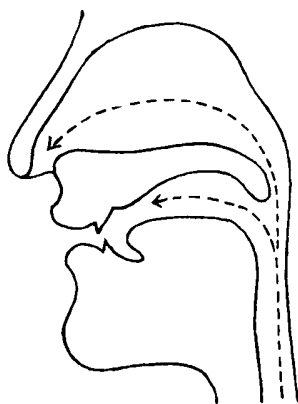


Fig. 4 The soft palate lowered

In this lowered position, the soft palate allows the breath to pass behind itself and up into the nasal cavity and out through the nose, as the dotted line shows. This is the normal position of the soft palate when we are not speaking but breathing quietly through the nose, with our mouth closed. It is also the position for the /m/-, /n/- and /ŋ/- sounds; say a long /m/-sound and nip your nose; this will stop the breath moving, and when you release it, the breath will continue out in a normal /m/-sound. Keep your lips closed and blow breath (without voice) hard through your nose, then draw it in again sharply: this will give you the feeling of breath moving in and out behind the soft palate.

Now say a /p/ but don't open your lips, just hold the breath behind the lips: there is no sound at all; keep your lips firmly closed still and send all the breath sharply out of the nose. Do this several times without opening your lips at all. What you feel at the back of your mouth is the soft palate going up and down; it is raised whilst you hold the /p/ and lowered suddenly when you let the air rush out through your nose.

For most of the sounds of all languages the soft palate is raised, so that the air is forced to go out through the mouth only.

Apart from this important raising and lowering of the soft palate, the whole of the palate, including the soft palate, is used by the tongue to interfere with the air stream. Say the vowel /ɑ:/ again and watch the tongue in your mirror: it is flat in the mouth. Now add a /k/ after the /ɑ:/ and you will see the back part of your tongue rise up and touch the soft palate so that the breath is completely stopped; then when you lower your tongue the breath rushes out again.

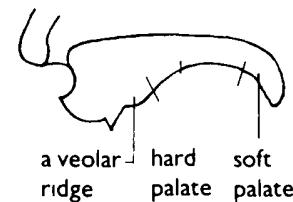


Fig. 5 The parts of the palate

The hard, fixed part of the palate is divided into two sections, shown in Figure 5, the *alveolar ridge* /ælvɪəʊlə rɪdʒ/ and the *hard palate*. The alveolar ridge is that part of the gums immediately behind the upper front teeth, and the hard palate is the highest part of the palate, between the alveolar ridge and the beginning of the soft palate. You can touch the whole of the alveolar ridge and the hard palate with your tongue-tip. The alveolar ridge is especially important in English because many of the consonant sounds like /t d n l r s z ʃ ʒ tʃ dʒ/ are made with the tongue touching or close to the alveolar ridge.

Finally the palate curves downwards towards the teeth at each side.

### 2.3 The teeth

The lower front teeth are not important in speech except that if they are missing certain sounds, e.g. /s/ and /z/, will be difficult to make. But the two upper front teeth are used in English to some extent. Put the tip of your tongue very close to the edge of these teeth and blow: this will produce a sound like the English /θ/ in *thin*; if you turn on the voice during this /θ/-sound you will get a sound like the English /ð/ in *this*.

### 2.4 The tongue

The tongue is the most important of the organs of speech because it

has the greatest variety of movement. Although the tongue has no obvious natural divisions like the palate, it is useful to think of it as divided into four parts, as shown in Figure 6.

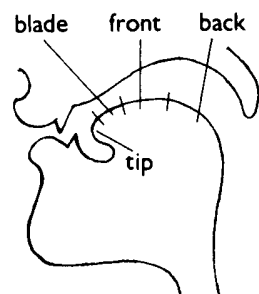


Fig. 6 The parts of the tongue

The *back* of the tongue lies under the soft palate when the tongue is at rest; the *front* lies under the hard palate, the *tip* and the *blade* lie under the alveolar ridge, the tip being the most forward part of all and the blade between the tip and the front. The tip and blade are particularly mobile and, as we have seen, they can touch the whole of the lips, the teeth, the alveolar ridge and the hard palate. The front can be flat on the bottom of the mouth or it can be raised to touch the hard palate, or it can be raised to any extent between these two extremes. Say the vowel /a:/ again and look into your mirror: the front is flat on the bottom of the mouth; now say /æ/ as in *cat*: the front rises a little; now say /e/ as in *met* (still keep your mouth as wide open as you can): the front rises again; and if you go on to say /i:/ as in *see* you will see that the front rises to a very high position, so high that it is hidden behind the teeth. These positions are shown in Figure 7. For /i:/ the front of

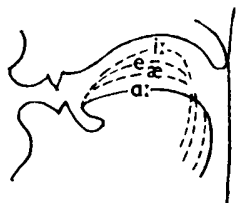


Fig. 7 Tongue positions for /i:/, /e/, /æ/, /a:/

the tongue comes very close to the hard palate. Put your mouth in this position, for /i:/, and draw air *inwards* quickly; you will feel cold air on the front of the tongue and on the hard palate just above it.

The back of the tongue too can be flat in the mouth, or it can be raised to touch the soft palate, or it can be raised to any position between these two extremes. Say /a:k/ again, as you did earlier, and hold the /k/-sound with your mouth wide open. You will see in your mirror that the back of the tongue rises from a very flat position for /a:/ to a position actually touching the soft palate for the /k/. Figure 8 shows these two extreme positions. The back of the tongue is in various positions between these two extremes for the vowels /ɒ, ɔ:, ʊ, u:/ in *pot, fought, put, boot*; say them in that order and feel the back of the tongue rise gradually towards the soft palate: you will not be able to

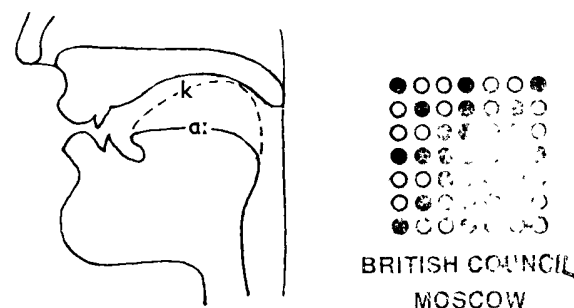


Fig. 8 Tongue positions for /a:/, /k/

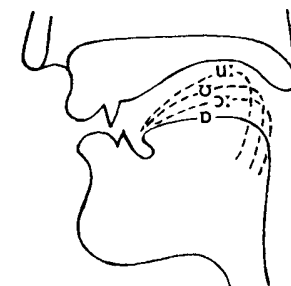


Fig. 9 Tongue positions for /u:/, /ʊ, ɔ:, ɒ/

see the movement in the mirror because the lips will be in the way, but the position of the back of the tongue for each of these vowels is shown in Figure 9. In /u:/ the back of the tongue is very close to the soft palate; put your mouth in position for /u:/ and draw air *inwards* quickly: you will feel cold air on the back of the tongue and the soft palate. Now do the same for /i:/ again and feel the difference when the front of the tongue is raised. Go from the /i:/ position to the /u:/ position several

times whilst drawing breath inwards, and get used to this difference between a high front and a high back position.

The tongue can also change its shape in another way. Say the sound /s/, keep your mouth in the /s/ position and draw breath inwards; you will feel cold air passing through a narrow passage between the blade of the tongue and the alveolar ridge, but no cold air at the sides of the tongue. Now say an /l/-sound and draw air inwards. This time you will feel cold air passing between the *sides* of the tongue and the sides of the palate, but not down the centre of the tongue. This is because for /s/ the sides of the tongue are pressed firmly against the sides of the palate, so that the breath is forced to pass down the narrow central passage between the blade of the tongue and the alveolar ridge. In /l/ the centre of the mouth is blocked by the tip and blade of the tongue pressed firmly against the alveolar ridge and the air passes instead between the sides of the tongue and the sides of the palate. So the sides of the tongue may be either curved upwards to meet the sides of the palate or left flat so that they do not touch the sides of the palate. Open your mouth wide, use your mirror and try to make your tongue take up a flat shape, as in Figure 10, and then a curved shape, with the sides raised but the centre line lower, as in Figure 11. This last position is very important

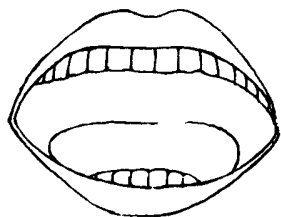


Fig. 10 Front view of flat tongue

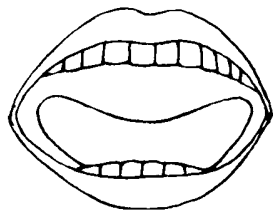


Fig. 11 Front view of grooved tongue

for English because many of the consonant sounds are pronounced with the sides of the tongue curved up in this way to meet the sides of the palate.

## 2.5 The lips

It is obvious that the lips can take up various different positions. They can be brought firmly together as in /p/ or /b/ or /m/ so that they completely block the mouth; the lower lip can be drawn inward and slightly upwards to touch the upper front teeth as in the sounds /f/ and /v/. And they can be kept apart either flat or with different amounts of rounding, and they can be pushed forward to a greater or lesser extent.

Of course, the closed position for /p, b, m/ and the lip-teeth position for /f/ and /v/ are used in English, but apart from this the English do not move their lips with very much energy: their lips are never very far apart, they do not take up very rounded shapes, they are rarely spread very much and almost never pushed forward or protruded. Watch English people talk either in real life or on films and notice how little the lips and the lower jaw move; some people make more lip-movement than others, but it is never necessary to exaggerate these movements. Watch people talking your language too, and see whether they move their lips more than the English. If so, you must remember when talking English to use your lips less than you do in your own language. The same is true for movements of the jaw: in normal speech there is rarely more than half an inch between the lips or a quarter of an inch between the teeth even when the mouth is at its widest open. No wonder English can be spoken quite easily whilst holding a pipe between the teeth!

In the chapters which follow we shall see how the movements of the organs of speech combine together in forming the sounds of English. You should study the descriptions of the movements very carefully, because what seems a quite small difference may in fact be very important in producing and recognizing an English sound correctly, and the difference between an English sound and one in your language may seem quite small when it is described, but the small difference in the movement of the speech organs may make all the difference between a result which sounds English and one which does not.

Suppose, for example, that in your language you have a /t/-sound which is made by touching the upper front teeth with the tip of your tongue: this is quite often the case. The difference between this /t/ and the /t/-sound of English is that the English /t/ is generally made with the tip of the tongue touching the alveolar ridge just behind the teeth. This may not seem much of a difference to you, but a /t/ which is made on the teeth sounds foreign to an English ear, and although it will be recognized as /t/, it will not sound correct in English.

When you study the movements of the speech organs for a certain sound of English, try to compare them with the movements for a similar sound in your language. Try to become conscious of what your speech organs are doing. The exercises which follow will help you to do this.

## **2.6 Exercises**

(Answers, where appropriate, on p. 134)

- 1 Copy Figures 1, 3 and 6. Label all the different parts of the speech organs. Do this several times, until you can do it without looking at the book.
- 2 Three different actions take place in the larynx. What are they?
- 3 Which sounds in your language are voiced, and which are voiceless? Which of these sounds are similar except for a difference of voicing, like /s/ and /z/ in English?
- 4 Can you sing a voiceless sound? And if not, why not?
- 5 How does the soft palate affect the direction of the air stream?
- 6 What sounds in your language are made with the soft palate lowered?
- 7 Make a /p/-sound and hold it with the lips closed; then, still keeping the lips closed, let the air burst out through the nose. Do the same with /t/ and /k/. Do the same with /b, d/, and /g/ and let *voiced* air burst out through the nose.
- 8 Say several /k/-sounds quickly one after the other, /k-k-k-k-k/, and feel the back of the tongue touching and leaving the soft palate. Do the same with /t/ – first with the tongue touching the alveolar ridge; then with the tongue-tip touching the upper front teeth. Can you do the same thing with the tongue-tip touching the centre of the hard palate?
- 9 Make the vowels /i:, ɪ, e, æ/ and feel how the front of the tongue is lowered each time and the jaw opens gradually. Do the same with /u:, ʊ, ɔ:, ɒ, ɑ:/ and feel how the back of the tongue is lowered.
- 10 What does the tongue do in making the sounds /aɪ, ɔɪ, aʊ/?
- 11 Make the flat and curved shapes of the tongue shown in Figures 10 and 11. Use your mirror.
- 12 Make a /t/-sound and hold it with the tongue-tip in contact with the alveolar ridge. Now gently bring the teeth together. What happens to the sides of the tongue and why?
- 13 Put your mouth in an /l/ position and draw breath in and out. Feel

it on the sides of the tongue. Do the same with /s/ and feel it on the centre of the tongue. Alternate the /s/ and /l/ positions and feel the sides of the tongue rise and lower as you go from one to the other.

### 3 The consonants of English

There are two good reasons for beginning with consonants rather than vowels. First, consonants contribute more to making English understood than vowels do. Second, consonants are generally made by a definite interference of the vocal organs with the air stream, and so are easier to describe and understand.

The sentence 'C—ld y— p—ss m— - p—c— -f str ng, pl—s-' is easy for an English reader to understand even though all of the vowel *letters* have been left out. Similarly, if in actually speaking we could leave out all the vowel *sounds* and pronounce only the consonants most English would still be fairly easy to understand. But look at the same sentence with all the consonant letters left out: '-ou— -ou -a— -e a ie-e o— —i—, —ea-e.' It is impossible to make any sense out of it, and the same would be true in speaking, because the consonants form the bones, the skeleton of English words and give them their basic shape.

Native speakers of English from different parts of the world have different accents, but the differences of accent are mainly the result of differences in the sound of the *vowels*; the consonants are pronounced in very much the same way wherever English is spoken. So if the vowels you use are imperfect it will not prevent you from being understood, but if the consonants are imperfect there will be a *great* risk of misunderstanding.

In dealing with the consonants you must first learn how each one is mainly distinguished from the others, the features which it *must* have so that it will not be mistaken for any other consonant. Then later you will learn about any special sounds of that phoneme which need small changes in their formation in different circumstances, changes which are not essential if you simply want to be understood, but which will make your English sound better.

#### 3.1 Friction consonants

There are nine consonant phonemes whose main sounds all have friction as their most important feature. They are /f, v, θ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, h/.

#### Friction consonants

For all of them the lungs push air through a narrow opening where it causes friction of various kinds.

/f/ and /v/

For both /f/ and /v/ the speech organs are in the position shown in Figure 12.

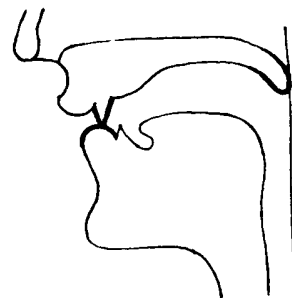


Fig. 12 /f/ and /v/

#### NOTICE

- 1 The soft palate is raised so that no air goes through the nose and it is all forced through the mouth.
- 2 The bottom lip is very close to the upper front teeth: this forms the narrowing and when air is pushed through this narrowing it causes slight friction.
- 3 The tongue is not directly concerned in making these sounds, but it does not lie idle; it takes up the position necessary for the *following* sound, so in *fi*: it will be in the /i/ position whilst /f/ is being pronounced, and in *fri*: it will be in the /r/ position, and so on.

The difference between /f/ and /v/ is mainly one of *strength*: /f/ is a strong consonant, /v/ is a weak one. Also /f/ is never voiced, but /v/ may be. And /f/ is rather *longer* than /v/.

So /f/ is a strong, voiceless, long consonant, /v/ is a weak, perhaps voiced, short consonant.

Put your lower lip and upper teeth close together and blow breath between them quite strongly: continue the sound and listen to the friction—it is not very noisy but can be heard quite easily. Now blow the breath through very gently; the friction is much less and must *always* be much less for /v/ than for /f/. Alternate this strong and weak friction for /f/ and /v/; don't worry about voicing, it is not important.

## Consonants

Now say the word *fast* **fɑ:st** with strong friction for the /f/. Now say *vast* **vɑ:st** with very short weak friction for the /v/. Alternate these: **fɑ:st**, **vɑ:st**, and be sure that there is very little, very weak friction for the /v/, but also be sure that it is the lip and the teeth which are causing the friction, *not* the two lips. Keep the upper lip out of the way altogether.

If your language has both /f/ and /v/, the sounds that you use will probably do quite well in English, provided that you are quite sure that both of them have this lip-teeth action, especially the /v/. Although there is very little friction for /v/ there must always be some; it must not be completely frictionless. Now practise the following lists of words, with long, strong friction for /f/ and short, weak friction for /v/.

<b>fɑ:st</b> fast	<b>vɑ:st</b> vast	<b>fju:</b> few	<b>vju:</b> view
<b>fɪl</b> feel	<b>vɪl</b> veal	<b>fɪə</b> fear	<b>vɪə</b> veer
<b>fəʊl</b> foal	<b>vəʊl</b> vole	<b>fɑɪl</b> file	<b>vɑɪl</b> vile
<b>fɛrɪ</b> ferry	<b>verɪ</b> very	<b>fæt</b> fat	<b>væt</b> vat
<b>fæn</b> fan	<b>væn</b> van	<b>fɛɪl</b> fail	<b>veɪl</b> veil

Now try these sounds between vowels. In this position the /v/ will be voiced in English, but the important thing for you is to make it short and weak: if you do this the voicing can take care of itself. (If your language has voiced /v/ anyway, this is fine.) Take special care in this position that the /v/ has some friction, though not too much, and that the friction is caused by lip-teeth action and not by the two lips. Use your mirror to make sure that the upper lip is well clear of the lower one.

<b>sʌfə</b> suffer	<b>kʌvə</b> cover
<b>deɪfə</b> deafer	<b>nevə</b> never
<b>snɪfɪŋ</b> sniffing	<b>gɪvɪŋ</b> giving
<b>pru:fɪŋ</b> proofing	<b>pru:vɪŋ</b> proving
<b>rʌfə</b> rougher	<b>lʌvə</b> lover
<b>səʊfə</b> sofa	<b>əʊvə</b> over
<b>seɪfə</b> safer	<b>seɪvə</b> savour
<b>ɒfə</b> offer	<b>hɒvə</b> hover
<b>dɪfaɪd</b> defied	<b>dɪvaɪd</b> divide
<b>rɪfju:z</b> refuse	<b>rɪvju:z</b> reviews

In phrases we do exactly the same, long strong friction for /f/ and short weak friction for /v/. Try these:

## Friction consonants



<b>verɪ fɑ:st</b> very fast	<b>verɪ vɑ:st</b> very vast
<b>aɪ fɪ:l fɑɪn</b> I feel fine	<b>aɪ fɪ:l vɑɪl</b> I feel vile
<b>fɑɪn fɜ:z</b> fine furs	<b>fɑɪn vɜ:s</b> fine verse
<b>fɔ: fænz</b> four fans	<b>fɔ: vænz</b> four vans
<b>ə gʊd fju:</b> a good few	<b>ə gʊd vju:</b> a good view

When /f/ and /v/ occur at the end of words, after a vowel, they have an effect on the *length* of the vowel. The strong consonant /f/ makes the vowel shorter, the weak consonant /v/ makes the vowel longer. This is an important general rule which applies to many other pairs of consonants as well: *strong consonants at the end of words shorten the preceding vowel, weak consonants lengthen it.* In the words *safe* **seɪf** and *save* **seɪv**, the /f/ and the /v/ have the same features as before: /f/ is stronger and longer, /v/ is weaker and shorter, very short indeed in this position, but the vowels are of very different lengths; in **seɪf** the /eɪ/ is quite short and in **seɪv** it is really long.

Say these words, **seɪf** and **seɪv**, and be particularly careful to lengthen out the vowel in **seɪv**, drawl it, drag it out, and then add a very short weak /v/ friction at the very end. Don't shorten the /eɪ/ in **seɪf** too much, but do be sure that the /eɪ/ in **seɪv** is very much longer. Now do the same with the following words:



<b>li:f</b> leaf	<b>li:v</b> leave	<b>laɪf</b> life	<b>laɪv</b> live
<b>hɑ:f</b> half	<b>hɑ:v</b> halve	<b>straɪf</b> strife	<b>straɪv</b> strive
<b>kɑ:f</b> calf	<b>kɑ:v</b> carve	<b>reɪf</b> Ralph	<b>reɪv</b> rave
<b>pru:f</b> proof	<b>pru:v</b> prove	<b>weɪf</b> waif	<b>weɪv</b> wave
<b>sɜ:f</b> surf	<b>sɜ:v</b> serve	<b>seɪf</b> safe	<b>seɪv</b> save

These words all contain vowel phonemes which are naturally long, that is to say longer than the vowels /ɪ e æ ʊ ʌ/ in similar positions. The short vowels behave like the long ones when followed by /f/ or /v/, that is, they are shortest when followed by strong /f/ and rather longer when followed by weak /v/, although they are never so long as the long vowels when these are followed by the weak consonant.

Try this with the words below: before /f/ make the vowel quite short, and before /v/ make it a little longer, about as long as the long vowels before /f/. And still make /f/ longer and stronger, and /v/ very short and weak in friction.



<b>stɪf</b> stiff	<b>sɪv</b> sieve	<b>ɒf</b> off	<b>ɒv</b> of
<b>klɪf</b> cliff	<b>lɪv</b> live	<b>rʌf</b> rough	<b>dʌv</b> dove
<b>snɪf</b> sniff	<b>gɪv</b> give	<b>blʌf</b> bluff	<b>lʌv</b> love
<b>gæf</b> gaffe	<b>hæv</b> have	<b>flʌf</b> fluff	<b>glʌv</b> glove

Now look at the phrases below, and decide which of the vowels have to be longer and which shorter. Remember that there are *three* lengths: (1) short vowels (/ɪ e æ ʊ ʌ/) before the strong consonant, e.g. *stɪf*, (2) short vowels before the weak consonant, and long vowels before the strong consonant, e.g. *glʌv* and *weɪf*, (3) long vowels before the weak consonant, e.g. *seɪv*. Now say them with good vowel length and good difference between /f/ and /v/.



ə ha:f snɪf	a half sniff	ə breɪv blʌf	a brave bluff
ə stɪf glʌv	a stiff glove	ə laɪv dʌv	a live dove
ə brɪ:f lʌv	a brief love	ə seɪf mu:v	a safe move
ə rʌf greɪv	a rough grave	ə greɪv grɪ:f	a grave grief
ə dwɔ:f stəʊv	a dwarf stove	ə klɪf draɪv	a cliff drive

Some of the most common English words which contain /f/ are: *family, far, fat, father, feel, few, fried, first, for, four, five, from, friend, front, before, after, afraid, different, difficult, left, office, perfect, prefer, suffer, awful, often, half, off, knife, life, laugh, self, wife, safe, cough, rough, stiff.*

Some of the most common English words which contain /v/ are: *very, valve, visit, voice, value, violent, vast, van, view, ever, never, over, river, seven, several, travel, even, every, heavy, live, of, give, love, move, prove, receive, believe, save, serve, twelve, wave, five, have.*

Sometimes when you are listening to English, listen especially for these words (and others containing /f/ and /v/) and try to fix the sounds in your mind.

/θ/ and /ð/

/θ/ and /ð/ are also friction sounds, /θ/ is *strong* and /ð/ is *weak*. Both have the position of the speech organs shown in Figure 13.

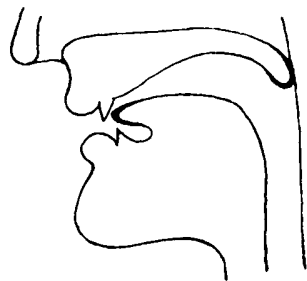


Fig. 13 /θ/ and /ð/

## NOTICE

- 1 The soft palate is raised so that all the breath is forced to go through the mouth.
- 2 The tip of the tongue is close to the upper front teeth: this is the narrowing where the friction is made.
- 3 The noise made by the friction for /θ/ and /ð/ is not very great, much less than for /s/ and /z/.

Put the tip of your tongue close to the cutting-edge of your upper front teeth. In a mirror you will be able to see the tip. Blow air through this position so that you get some friction, but not too much, not so much as for /s/. Continue the sound and listen to it. /θ/ should make the same amount of noise as /f/, not more. Try /f/ and /θ/ alternately until you get the friction right for /θ/. Now make less friction for /ð/ by pushing the air more gently. The friction for /ð/ when it is properly made can only just be heard. Now alternate the stronger /θ/ and the weaker /ð/ not too much friction in /θ/ and even less in /ð/.

All that I said about strong and weak consonants on p. 25 is true for /θ/ and /ð/. /θ/ is stronger and longer and always voiceless, /ð/ is weaker and shorter and may be voiced. Confusing /θ/ and /ð/ will scarcely ever lead to misunderstanding because they rarely occur in words which are otherwise similar, but if you do not make the difference properly it will be noticeable.

Try the words given below, and be sure (1) that the air passes between the tongue tip and the teeth, and (2) that the friction is never too strong.



θɪn thin	ðen then	θæŋk thank	ðæt that
θɪŋk think	ðɪs this	θɔ:t thought	ðəʊz those
θɪ:f thief	ði:z these		


Some people may confuse /θ/ with /f/ and /ð/ with /v/; this is not very important for understanding, since some English speakers do the same, but you should try not to make these confusions because they will be noticeable. Say these words, and be sure that for /f/ and /v/ you are using a lip-teeth action, and for /θ/ and /ð/ a tongue-teeth action.




fɪn fin	θɪn thin	fɔ:t fought	θɔ:t thought
fri: free	θri: three	fɪl frill	θɪl thrill
fɜ:st first	θɜ:st thirst	fɔ:tɪ forty	θɜ:tɪ thirty
ðæt that	væt vat	ðen then	vent vent
ðeɪ they	veɪn vain	ðeə there	viə veer
ði:z these	vi:l veal	ðəʊ though	vəʊt vote




Between vowels /ð/ is voiced, but the important thing for you is to make it very short and weak, and let the voicing take care of itself. /θ/ is always voiceless. Say these words:

 ɔ:θə author	lðə other	mɑ:θə Martha	mʌðə mother
ɑ:θə Arthur	rɑ:ðə rather	nʌθɪŋ nothing	brʌðə brother
ɜ:θɪ earthy	wɜ:ðɪ worthy	bɜ:θə Bertha	fɜ:ðə further


Now try to keep /f, v, θ, ð/ separate in this position.

 ɔ:θə author	ɒfə offer	ɑ:θə Arthur	tʌfə tougher
nʌθɪŋ nothing	pʌfɪŋ puffing	tu:θɪ toothy	ru:fɪŋ roofing
brʌðə brother	lʌvə lover	leðə leather	nevə never
fɑ:ðə father	kɑ:və carver	hi:ðən heathen	i:vən even

At the end of words /θ/ and /ð/ affect a preceding vowel in the same way as /f/ and /v/. Try with some long vowels, and make the vowel specially long before /ð/.

 grʌʊθ growth	ləʊð loathe
tu:θ tooth	smu:ð smooth
bəʊθ both	kləʊð clothe
ri:θ wreath	bri:ð breathe
feɪθ faith	beɪð bathe
maʊθ mouth (n.)	maʊð mouth (vb.)

The only word in which /ð/ occurs finally after a short vowel is /wɪð/ *with*, but try keeping the vowel at its shortest in the following:

 mɒθ moth	mɪθ myth	breθ breath
deθ death	rɒθ wrath	

Some of the most common English words which contain /θ/ are: *thank, thick, thin, thing, thirsty, thousand, three, through, throw, Thursday, thought, thirty, healthy, wealthy, something, anything, both, bath, breath, cloth, earth, fourth, etc., faith, health, month, north, south, path, worth, death.*

Some of the most common English words which contain /ð/ (and some of these are amongst the commonest in the language) are: *the, this, that, these, those, there, their, then, they, them, though, than, other, mother, father, brother, either, neither, further, clothes, leather, together, weather, whether, breathe, with, smooth.*

Sometimes when you listen to English listen specially for these

words (and others containing /θ/ and /ð/) and try to fix the sounds in your mind.

On p. 33 you will find more about /θ/ and /ð/ when they are close to /s/ and /z/.

/s/ and /z/

/s/ is a strong friction sound and /z/ is a weak one. The position of the speech organs for these sounds is shown in Figure 14.

## NOTICE

- 1 The soft palate is raised so that all the breath is forced to go through the mouth.
- 2 The tip and blade of the tongue are very close to the alveolar ridge. There is a very considerable narrowing at this point, *not* near the teeth and *not* near the hard palate.
- 3 The teeth are very close together.
- 4 The friction for these sounds, especially for /s/, is much greater than for /f, v, θ/ and /ð/.

There will be a sound similar to /s/ in your language: make this sound, then keep your mouth in that position and draw air inwards; make small changes in the position of the tip and blade of the tongue until you can feel that the cold air is hitting the tongue at the very centre of the alveolar ridge, not further forward and not further back. /z/ is the weak sound, so when you are satisfied with the strong friction for /s/, push air through more slowly so that the friction is weaker. Alternate strong and weak friction.

Once again, as for the other consonants, the strong one, /s/, is longer and always voiceless, the weak one, /z/, is quite short and may be voiced, but again the *gentleness* of /z/ is the thing to concentrate on.

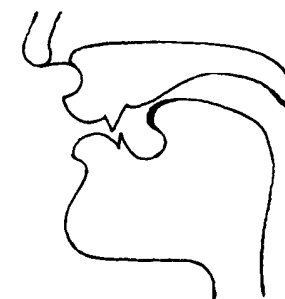


Fig. 14 /s/ and /z/

/z/ is not a common sound at the beginning of words, so confusing /s/ and /z/ in initial position will not generally lead to misunderstanding; but English speakers do distinguish them, so you should try to do so too. Try the following words:



sɪŋk sink	zɪŋk zinc	su: Sue	zu: zoo
sed said	zed Zed	si:l seal	zi:l zeal
sɔ:n sawn	zəʊn zone	sɪst cyst	zest zest

Between vowels /z/ is voiced, and if you voice this sound naturally in that position that is good; if not, the sound should be made very gently and very short. /s/ is always voiceless. Try these words:



lu:sə looser	lu:zə loser	kɔ:sə coarser	kɔ:zə causer
leɪsɪ lacy	leɪzɪ lazy	fʌsɪ fussy	fʌzɪ fuzzy
bʌsɪz buses	bʌzɪz buzzes	reɪsɪŋ racing	reɪzɪŋ raising

At the end of words, after a vowel, /s/ makes the vowel rather shorter and /z/ makes it longer, as with /f, v, θ, ð/, and in this position /z/ is particularly short and gentle – just the faintest touch of a /z/ is sufficient, but the vowel must be good and long. Try the words below and make both the difference of vowel length and of consonant strength:



pleɪs place	pleɪz plays	nɪ:s niece	nɪ:z knees
kɔ:s coarse	kɔ:z cause	praɪs price	praɪz prize
lu:s loose	u:z lose	hɜ:s hearse	hɜ:z hers

And now some more with short vowels:



bʌs bus	bʌz buzz	hɪs hiss	hɪz his
æs ass	æz as		

For the speakers of many languages (e.g. French, German, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, etc.) there are not separate phonemes /θ/ and /s/ but only one which is usually more like the English /s/. So there is a danger that /s/ will be used instead of /θ/. The difference between them is that /s/ is made with the tip and blade of the tongue close to the centre of the alveolar ridge and makes a strong friction, whereas /θ/ is made with the tongue tip near the upper teeth and makes much less friction.

Distinguish carefully between all these pairs:



sɪn sin	θɪn thin	sɔ:t sort	θɔ:t thought
sɪŋ sing	θɪŋ thing	sʌm sum	θʌm thumb
sɪŋk sink	θɪŋk think	sai sigh	θai thigh

Now do them again, and be absolutely certain that you do not replace /s/ by /θ/: there is always a danger of replacing the more familiar with the less familiar sound, as well as the reverse.

Now try them at the end of words (the vowel length is the same all the time because both are strong consonants and shorten the vowel), but /s/ must still make much more noise than /θ/.



maʊs mouse	maʊθ mouth	feɪs face	feɪθ faith
mɒs moss	mɒθ moth	pɑ:s pass	pɑ:θ path
fɔ:s force	fɔ:θ fourth	wɜ:s worse	wɜ:θ worth

Repeat this exercise and be sure again that you are not replacing /s/ by /θ/.

The same difficulty applies to /z/ and /ð/. Both are weak sounds but /z/ makes more noise than /ð/. Try these words:



zu: zoo	ðəʊ though
bri:z breeze	bri:ð breathe
raɪz rise	raɪð writhe
ti:zɪŋ teasing	ti:ðɪŋ teething
ri:zən reason	hi:ðən heathen
zed Zed	ðen then
kləʊz close	kləʊð clothe
leɪz lays	leɪð lathe
kləʊzɪŋ closing	kləʊðɪŋ clothing
maɪzə miser	naɪðə neither

Go through these words again and be sure that you are not replacing /ð/ by /z/ or /z/ by /ð/.

Those people who speak languages where /θ/ and /s/ are not separate phonemes usually have a special difficulty when /s/ and /θ/ occur close together in words like θɪŋks *thinks*. Because /s/ and /θ/ are both made with the tongue-tip and because the teeth and the alveolar ridge are rather close together there is a danger of using /s/ in both places, or even /θ/ in both places, giving sɪŋks or θɪŋkθ. This must be avoided if possible. /z/ and /ð/ give exactly the same difficulty. Try the following words and be careful to make /s/ and /z/ noisy and /θ/ and /ð/ less noisy: saʊθ *south*, ðɪs *this*, ði:z *these*, ðəʊz *those*, θaɪz *thighs*, smu:ð *smooth*, θɪŋz *things*, sevənθ *seventh*, θɜ:stɪ *thirsty*, mʌðəz *mothers*, sʌðən *southern*, ðeəz *theirs*, θɪs| *thistle*.




Making /s, z/ and /θ, ð/ sufficiently different from each other is even more difficult when they are next to each other in a word or phrase like bɑ:ðz *baths* or bæʊθ saɪdɪz *both sides*. This happens very often in English




because /s/ and /z/ are very common at the end of words and /ð/ begins some very common words such as *the, this, that, them*, etc.


Start with a long /θ/-sound, not too much noise, then slide the tip of the tongue gently backwards to the alveolar ridge, which will give the noisy /s/-sound. Do this several times, and be sure that you start with a good /θ/; then gradually make the /θ/ shorter before you slide the tip back to the /s/ position. Now practise these words and be careful to make a distinct difference each time:

 mθθ moth	mθs moss	mθθs moths
mɪθ myth	mɪs miss	mɪθs myths
fɔ:θ fourth	fɔ:s force	fɔ:θs fourths

Now do the same with /ð/ and /z/; start with a long quiet /ð/ and gently slide the tongue back to give the noisier /z/. Gradually shorten the sounds (but be careful to make *both*, not /ð/ or /z/ alone) and then practise making a difference between these words:

 brɪ:ð breathe	brɪ:z breeze	brɪ:ðz breathes
rɑ:ð writhe	rɑ:z rise	rɑ:ðz writhes
kləʊð clothe	kləʊz close	kləʊðz clothes


Now try going from /s/ to /θ/; this time gently slide the tongue forward towards the teeth until the noisy /s/ is replaced by the quiet /θ/. Do this several times and be sure that *both* sounds are heard. Then practise these phrases:

 ə naɪs θɪŋ a nice thing	ɪts θɪk it's thick
dʒækz θɪn Jack's thin	lets θɪŋk let's think
jes θæŋks yes, thanks	pɑ:s θru: pass through

Do the same with /z/ and /ð/ and then practise these phrases:

 hu:z ðɪs who's this?	ju:z ðæt use that
əz ðəʊ as though	dʒɒnz ðeə John's there
lu:z ðəm lose them	weəz ðə ti: where's the tea?

And finally some more phrases in which /s, z, θ, ð/ come together in various orders. Always be careful to make one noisy sound (/s, z/) and one quiet one (/θ, ð/):

 wɒts ðæt what's that?	bəʊθ saɪdz both sides
ɪts ðeəz it's theirs	waɪz θɔ:ts wise thoughts

hi:z θɜ:tɪ he's thirty	wɪð seɪftɪ with safety
bri:ð sɒftlɪ breathe softly	ði:z θri: these three

There are various tongue-twisters – sentences which are difficult to say – based on the mixing of these four sounds; for example **sɪks θɪn θɪs| stɪks** *six thin thistle sticks* and **ðə li:θ pəli:s dɪsmɪsəθ** *as the Leith police dismisseth us*, but native English speakers find these difficult to say, so there is no need to try to master them. It is much better to concentrate on words and phrases like those above which occur very often in normal conversation.

Some of the very many common words containing /s/ are: *same, sing, sit, Saturday, Sunday, save, see, say, second, seem, self, send, six, seven, side, since, sleep, slow, small, so, some, son, sister, soon, start, stay, stop, still, against, almost, beside(s), least, lost, last, listen, message, mister, Mrs, use (n.), face, miss, across, advice, case, cats (etc.), takes (etc.), pass, less, -ness, nice, piece, perhaps, yes.*

Some of the very many common words containing /z/ are: *noisy, busy, reason, easy, lazy, losing, as, his, hers, cause, use (vb.), has, is, lose, was, days, dogs (etc.), does, moves (etc.), noise, please.*


### /ʃ/ and /ʒ/

/ʃ/ is a strong friction sound and /ʒ/ is a weak one. The position of the speech organs for these sounds is shown in Figure 15.

#### NOTICE

- 1 The soft palate is raised so that all the breath is forced to go through the mouth.
- 2 There is a narrowing between the tip of the tongue and the *back* of the alveolar ridge.
- 3 The *front* of the tongue is higher than for /s/ and /z/.
- 4 The lips are very slightly rounded.

Start from /s/: pull the tip of the tongue backwards a little so that the narrowing is at the back of the alveolar ridge (draw the breath inwards to check that you have the tongue in the right place). Keep this position and put the rest of the tongue in position to say the vowel /ɪ/, *slightly* round the lips, and push the breath through strongly. /ʃ/ is a much noisier sound than /f/ and /θ/ and only a little less noisy than /s/. For /ʒ/ the friction is weaker, and shorter.

 /ʒ/ does not occur at the beginning of English words but /ʃ/ quite frequently does. Try these: ʃi: *she*, ʃəʊ *show*, ʃɒp *shop*, ʃɪp *ship*, ʃed *shed*.

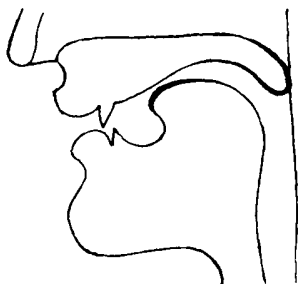


Fig. 15 /s/ and /z/

ʃɜ:t *shirt*, ʃɑ:p *sharp*, ʃɔ:t *short*, ʃeə *share*, ʃaɪn *shine*, ʃʊə *sure*, ʃʌt *shut*, ʃu: *shoe*, ʃʊd *should*.

Between vowels /z/ is voiced and if you voice this sound naturally in that position so much the better; if not, make it very gentle and very short. /s/ is always voiceless. There are almost no cases in which /s/ and /z/ distinguish words which are otherwise the same, but practise these mixed words: **preʃəs** *precious*, **treʒə** *treasure*, **əʊʃən** *ocean*, **ɪkspləʊʒən** *explosion*, **neɪʃən** *nation*, **ɪnveɪʒən** *invasion*, **kəndɪʃən** *condition*, **dɪsɪʒən** *decision*, **preʃə** *pressure*, **meʒə** *measure*, **rɪleɪʃən** *relation*, **əkeɪʒən** *occasion*.

At the end of words /s/ is quite common but /z/ is very rare and only occurs in a few words borrowed from French: like the other gentle sounds it makes the vowel before it longer, whereas /s/ makes it shorter. Try these /s/ words:

fɪnɪʃ <i>finish</i>	rʌbɪʃ <i>rubbish</i>	kræʃ <i>crash</i>	krʌʃ <i>crush</i>
wɒʃ <i>wash</i>	pʊʃ <i>push</i>	li:ʃ <i>leash</i>	hɑ:ʃ <i>harsh</i>

And now these /z/ words, making the vowels fully long:

gæɑ:ʒ <i>garage</i>	beɪʒ <i>beige</i>	ru:ʒ <i>rouge</i>
---------------------	-------------------	-------------------

As you can see, if you confuse /s/ and /z/, not much damage is done, though since native English speakers distinguish them you should try to too. However, it is much more dangerous to confuse /s/ and /ʃ/ because many words are kept separate only by this difference. In some languages (e.g. Spanish, Greek) there is only one phoneme where English has both /s/ and /ʃ/ and if this is so you must take special care with these phonemes. (The replacement of /s/ by /ʃ/ gives a rather drunken effect to one's speech!) In particular the friction of /s/ is sharper and higher than that of /ʃ/ because the tongue-tip is nearer to

the teeth, so practise the pairs of words below and be sure that you move your tongue to the right positions for the two consonants:

səʊ	so	ʃəʊ	show	sɑ:	sigh	ʃɑ:	shy
sɒk	sock	ʃɒk	shock	sɪ:	see	ʃi:	she
sɔ:t	sort	ʃɔ:t	short	seɪm	same	ʃeɪm	shame
pɜ:sən	person	pɜ:ʃən	Persian	beɪsən	basin	neɪʃən	nation
lɪsən	listen	mɪʃən	mission	mɪsɪŋ	missing	wɪʃɪŋ	wishing
li:s	lease	li:ʃ	leash	æs	ass	æʃ	ash
mes	mess	meʃ	mesh				

The danger of confusing words with /z/ and /ʒ/ is very small because few pairs of words have only this difference, but to use one of these where the other is usual will make your English sound wrong, so keep the two separate. Try the following:

rɪzən	risen	vɪʒən	vision	reɪzə	razor	ɪreɪʒə	erasure
reɪzən	raisin	ɪnveɪʒən	invasion	rəʊzə	Rosa	kləʊʒə	closure
ru:z	ruse	ru:ʒ	rouge	beɪz	bays	beɪʒ	beige

Some of the commonest words containing /ʃ/ are: *shape, she, ship, sharp, shop, shall, should, short, shut, shout, show, shoulder, shoe, shoot, shine, shore, sure, anxious, ashamed, machine, patient, position, station, motion, nation, ocean, mention, pressure, precious, bush, crash, crush, fish, flesh, foolish, fresh, greenish* (etc.), *punish, push, rush, selfish, wash, wish, dish*.

Some of the commonest words containing /z/ are: *measure, pleasure, usual, division, revision, collision, invasion, vision, inclusion, illusion, provision, explosion, leisure, garage, barrage, rouge, beige*.

### /h/

There are as many /h/-sounds in English as there are vowels, because /h/ always occurs before a vowel and consists of the sound of breath passing between the open vocal cords and out of the mouth which is already prepared for the following vowel. Before /i:/ the mouth is in position for /i:/, before /ɑ:/ it is ready for /ɑ:/, and so on; so in order to make /h/-sounds, the mouth is held ready for the vowel and a short gasp of breath is pushed up by the lungs. /h/ does not make very much noise, but it must not be left out when it should be sounded, for two reasons: (1) many words are distinguished by the presence or absence of /h/, like *hɪə* *here* and *ɪə* *ear*, (2) English speakers consider that the leaving out of /h/ is the mark of an uncultivated speaker.

Leaving out /h/ is the biggest danger, but a lesser error is to make /h/-sounds too noisy. Some speakers (for instance, Spaniards, Greeks, Poles) push the breath between the back of the tongue and the soft palate and make a scraping noise at that point. This sounds rather unpleasant to English people and you should avoid it if possible. For the words below, get your mouth ready for the vowel and push a little gasp of breath through your mouth just before the vowel starts:



hɑ:t heart	hə: her	hæt hat
hɔ:l hall	hu: who	hi: he

Say all those words several times and be sure that the /h/-sound is there, but not too noisy – just the sound of breath streaming from the mouth.

Now compare the following pairs, one word with /h/ and one without:



hɑ:m harm	ɑ:m arm	hi:t heat	i:t eat
hedʒ hedge	edʒ edge	hɔ:l hall	ɔ:l all
heə hair	eə air	hɪl hill	ɪl ill

/h/ also occurs in the middle of words (although never at the end of words) and should be made in the same way as before. If the vocal cords happen to vibrate and give voice during /h/ this is normal, but there is no need to try especially to voice the sound. Try these words, with a definite /h/, but no scraping:



bɪhaɪnd behind	rɪhɜ:s rehearse	rɪ:haʊz re-house
enɪhaʊ anyhow	ki:həʊl key-hole	ʌnhəʊli unholy
ælkəhɒl alcohol	bɪfɔ:hænd beforehand	

/h/ is especially difficult for those who have no such sound in their own language (for example French, Italian) in phrases where words with /h/ and words without it are close together. If you have this trouble you must practise examples like those below quite *slowly* at first, and be sure that the words which ought to have /h/ do actually have it, and, equally important, that those without /h/ do *not* have it. Try them now, slowly:



haʊz ɑ:θə	how's Arthur?
ʌʊt əv hænd	out of hand
ɪt s ɔ:fli hevi	it's awfully heavy
hɪz hæʊmz ɪn aɪələnd	his home's in Ireland
helən went ʌʊt	Helen went out

wi:ɔ:l went hæʊm	we all went home
aɪ hɪt henri ɪn ði: aɪ	I hit Henry in the eye
aɪ ɑ:skt æn haʊ fi: hɜ:d əbaʊt ɪt	I asked Ann how she heard about it

Say each of those examples several times slowly with the /h/ in the right places before you speed up to a normal pace.

A few common words sometimes have /h/ and sometimes do not, for example, *he, him, her, have*. This is explained on p. 92.

Some of the commonest words which always contain /h/ are: *half, hand, hat, head, health, hear, here, heart, heavy, hide, high, history, hit, hold, hole, home, hope, horse, hat, house, how, hundred, husband, behind, before-hand, household, anyhow, greenhouse, manhole, inhale, rehearse, coherent*.

### 3.2 Stop consonants

In stop consonants the breath is completely stopped at some point in the mouth, by the lips or tongue-tip or tongue-back, and then released with a slight explosion. There are four pairs of phonemes containing stops /p, b/, /t, d/, /k, g/ and /tʃ, dʒ/, and like the friction consonants one of each pair is strong and the other weak.

/p/ and /b/

/p/ is a strong stop consonant and /b/ is a weak one. The position of the organs of speech for these stops is shown in Figure 16.

#### NOTICE

- 1 The lips are closed firmly and the soft palate is raised so that the breath cannot get out of either the nose or the mouth but is trapped for a short time.
- 2 When the lips are opened suddenly the breath rushes out with a slight explosion or popping noise.
- 3 Before the lips are opened, the rest of the mouth takes up the position for the following sound, a vowel position if a vowel follows, as in *pool*, or a consonant position if a consonant follows, as in *play*.

/p/ is a strong sound, like /f/ and /θ/ and /s/ and /ʃ/, but it has a special feature which these do not have: it causes the following sound to lose some of the voicing which it would otherwise have. For example, in *pu:l pool* the first part of the vowel /u:/ has no voice – it consists of breath flowing through the mouth which is in position for /u:/. In fact this is what happens for /h/, as we saw on p. 37, so that we may write

this voiceless period like this: p<sup>h</sup>u:l, where the <sup>h</sup> represents a voiceless kind of /u:/. Try making this voiceless /u:/ by itself; it is rather like what you do when you blow out a light. Now put the /p/ in front of it, still with no voice, only strong breath. Now put the vowel /u:/ itself after the breath, p<sup>h</sup>u:. Do this several times and be sure that the period of breath is there before the /u:/ starts. Do the same thing with other vowels in the words p<sup>h</sup>ɔ:t, p<sup>h</sup>ɑ:t, p<sup>h</sup>æt, p<sup>h</sup>et, p<sup>h</sup>ɪt, p<sup>h</sup>i:t. It is very

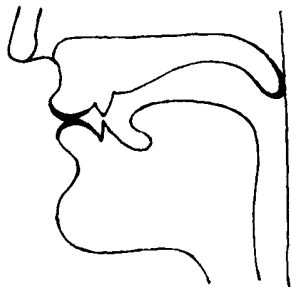


Fig. 16 /p/ and /b/

important that the period of breath (which is called *aspiration*) should be there each time. It is this aspiration which mainly separates /p/ from /b/.

Now try /p/ with a following consonant, as in /pleɪ/. Keep the lips closed for /p/, and behind them put your tongue in position for /l/; then open the lips and let the breath flow through the /l/ position, with no voice but considerable friction. This gives a voiceless /l/-sound, which is written /l/. Do this several times p<sup>h</sup>l, p<sup>h</sup>l, p<sup>h</sup>l still with no voice. Now put the ordinary voiced /l/ after p<sup>h</sup>l p<sup>h</sup>l and then go on to the vowel, p<sup>h</sup>lei. Do the same thing with the words p<sup>h</sup>reɪ and p<sup>h</sup>juə, and see that breath flows through the /r/ and /j/ position, giving /r/ and /j/, with friction, before the voiced /r/ and /j/ are heard.

/b/ is a weak stop, and it *never* has aspiration. The vocal cords may or may not vibrate whilst the lips are still closed, but they must vibrate for the following sound, whether vowel or consonant. Try the word buk, and make the /b/ very gentle and without any aspiration. Do the same with bɔ:t, bɑ:, bæk, bel, bit, bi:n. A following consonant is prepared for whilst the lips are closed and is voiced as soon as they open. Try brɪt, b u:, bju:tɪ with a gentle /b/.

Now try the following pairs of words, and make the /p/ strong and aspirated and the /b/ weak and unaspirated:

### Stop consonants



pi:k	peak	bi:k	beak	pɪt	pit	bit	bit
pæk	pack	bæk	back	pɑ:k	park	bɑ:k	bark
pɔ:t	port	bɔ:t	bought	pʊl	pull	bʊl	bull
praɪd	pride	braɪd	bride	pleɪz	plays	bleɪz	blaze

When /p/ occurs between vowels the aspiration may be less noticeable or even absent, but it will never do any harm to keep the aspiration in this position too. /b/ is of course never aspirated, but in this position it is usually voiced. The most important thing, as with the other weak consonants, is to make it very gentle and short. Try these words:



hæpɪ	happy	ʃæbɪ	shabby	sʌpə	supper	rʌbə	rubber
peɪpə	paper	leɪbə	labour	ri:peɪ	repel	ri:beɪ	rebel
							(vb.)
sɪmple	simple	sɪmbəl	symbol	əplai	apply	əblɪdʒ	oblige

Some learners (e.g. Spaniards) have great difficulty in hearing and making a difference between /b/ and /v/ in this position, so that the words *marble* and *marvel* sound the same. They must take great care to close the lips *very firmly* for /b/, so that the sound makes an explosion and not a friction. Try these words:



mɑ:b	marble	mɑ:v	marvel	rɪbən	ribbon	rɪvə	river
hæbɪt	habit	hævɪt	have it	rʌbə	rubber	lʌvə	lover
leɪbə	labour	feɪvə	favour	beɪbɪ	baby	neɪvɪ	navy

In final position (before a pause) /p/ is aspirated and shortens the vowel before it, whilst /b/ is particularly weak and makes only very little noise, but lengthens the vowel before it.

In some languages (e.g. Cantonese, Vietnamese) a final stop is not exploded or is replaced by a glottal stop (a stop consonant in which the breath is blocked by the vocal cords, see p. 14). Speakers of these languages must be very careful to form /p/ and /b/ with the lips, and to open the lips and allow the breath to explode out of the mouth before a pause. Try these words:



rɪp	rip	rɪb	rib	kæp	cap	kæb	cab
rəʊp	rope	rəʊb	robe	traɪp	tripe	traɪb	tribe
tæp	tap	tæb	tab	ræp	wrap	græb	grab

Those who have difficulty with /b/ and /v/ must again be sure to close the lips firmly for the /b/ and make a very light explosion but no friction. Try:



ri <b>b</b>	rib	gi <b>v</b>	give	kæ <b>b</b>	cab	hæ <b>v</b>	have
tra <b>ɪ</b> b	tribe	dra <b>ɪ</b> v	drive	kl <b>ʌ</b> b	club	gl <b>ʌ</b> v	glove

When /p/ or /b/ are followed immediately by one of the other stop consonants /t, d, k, g/ or by /m/ or /n/ the sound is made a little differently; this is dealt with on p. 67.

Some of the commonest words containing /p/ are: *page, pair, paper, pardon, part, pass, pay, people, perhaps, piece, place, plate, play, please, plenty, poor, possible, post, pound, pretty, price, pull, push, put, appear, April, company, compare, complain, complete, copy, expect, happen, happy, important, open, sleep, cheap, cup, drop, group, heap, help, hope, keep, map, rope, shape, sharp, shop, stop, step, top, up, wrap.*

Some of the commonest words containing /b/ are: *back, bad, bag, bath, be, beautiful, because, become, bed, before, begin, behind, believe, belong, below, besides, best, between, big, black, blue, both, boy, bread, break, break-fast, bring, but, busy, buy, by, brown, able, about, above, September (etc.), February, habit, harbour, husband, neighbour, number, obey, possible, probable, public, remember, table, job, rub, rob, club, slab, grab.*

### /t/ and /d/

/t/ is a strong stop consonant and /d/ is a weak one. The position of the organs of speech for these stops is shown in Figure 17.

#### NOTICE

- 1 The tip of the tongue (*not* the blade) is firmly against the middle of the alveolar ridge, not too near the teeth and not near the hard palate.
- 2 The soft palate is raised, so the breath cannot escape through either the nose or the mouth, but is trapped for a short time.
- 3 The sides of the tongue are firmly against the sides of the palate, so that the breath cannot pass over the sides of the tongue.
- 4 When the tongue-tip is lowered suddenly from the teeth ridge the breath rushes out with a slight explosion or popping noise.

The strong stop /t/ is aspirated in the same way as /p/ and this may be written in a similar way, e.g. t<sup>h</sup>u: *too*. Put the tongue tip on the very centre of the alveolar ridge; be sure that only the very point of the tongue is in contact, not the blade; then allow the air to burst out with a voiceless vowel /u:/; do this several times before adding the normal voiced vowel and be sure that when you do add the /u:/ the voiceless period is still there. Do this several times and each time check the exact

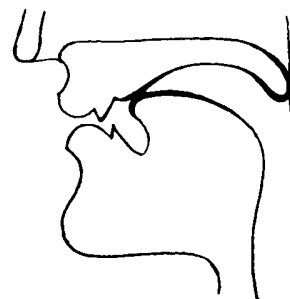


Fig. 17 /t/ and /d/

position of the tongue-tip and the aspiration. Then do the same thing with other vowels: t<sup>h</sup>ɔ:t, t<sup>h</sup>ɒp, t<sup>h</sup>ɪn, t<sup>h</sup>i:z, t<sup>h</sup>ɜ:n, t<sup>h</sup>ʌn. Then try the word *twɪn*, where the first part of /w/ comes out voiceless and tju:n where /j/ is also partly voiceless.

/d/ is short and weak and never aspirated; compare the following words:



tu:	two	du:	do	tɔ:n	torn	dɔ:n	dawn
ten	ten	den	den	taɪ	tie	daɪ	die
tʌn	ton	dʌn	done	taʊn	town	daʊn	down
tju:n	tune	dju:n	dune	twɪn	twin	dwɪndl	dwindle

As with /p/, when /t/ occurs between vowels, the aspiration may be weaker or even absent, but it will never do any harm to keep the aspiration in this position too. /d/ in this position is usually voiced, but concentrate mainly on making it very gentle and short, and if it is voiced as well so much the better. Try these words:




rartə	writer	rardə	rider	wetɪŋ	wetting	wedɪŋ	wedding
lætə	latter	lædə	ladder	wɔ:tə	water	wɔ:də	warder
wartɪʃ	whitish	wardɪʃ	widish	pʊtɪŋ	putting	pʊdɪŋ	pudding

Speakers who find /b/ and /v/ difficult in this position will also find /d/ and /ð/ hard to distinguish. Concentrate on making /d/ with the tip of the tongue firmly against the alveolar ridge, and make sure it is a firm stop rather than a friction sound. Compare:




raɪdɪŋ	riding	raɪðɪŋ	writhing
bri:dɪŋ	breeding	bri:ðɪŋ	breathing
ləʊdɪŋ	loading	ləʊðɪŋ	loathing
lædə	ladder	læðə	lather

In final position /t/ is aspirated and shortens the vowel before it, whilst /d/ is particularly weak and makes only very little noise, but lengthens the vowel before it. However, speakers who tend not to allow /t/ and /d/ to explode in this position should be sure not only to make the difference of vowel length but also to allow the breath to explode out of the mouth. Try these words:

	bet bet	bed bed	hɑ:t heart	hɑ:d hard
	lert late	leɪd laid	sɑ:t sight	sɑ:d side
	set set	sed said	brɔ:t brought	brɔ:d broad

/d/ and /ð/ may again be difficult to distinguish in this position. Be sure that /d/ is made with the tongue-tip firmly on the alveolar ridge, and that the breath is released with a tiny explosion. Try the words:

	bri:d breed	bri:ð breathe	raɪd ride	raɪð writhe
	ləʊd load	ləʊð loathe	sɑɪd side	sɑɪð scythe

When /t/ and /d/ are followed by any of the other stop consonants, /p, b, k, g/ or by /m/ or /n/ or /l/, the sounds are made a little differently. This is dealt with on pp. 67–73.

Some of the many common words containing /t/ are: *table, take, tell, ten, time, to, today, together, too, top, towards, town, Tuesday, turn, twelve, two, talk, taste, after, better, between, city, dirty, hotel, into, matter, notice, particular, protect, quarter, Saturday, water, writer, about, at, beat, bite, boat, but, coat, eat, eight, fat, flat, gate, get, great, hot, it, let, lot, not, ought, might, put, what.* (Notice also the past tense of verbs ending with a strong consonant, e.g. *missed mist, laughed la:ft.*)

Some of the many common words containing /d/ are: *day, dead, dear, December, decide, depend, different, difficult, do (etc.), dinner, dog, door, down, during, already, Monday (etc.), holiday, idea, lady, ladder, medicine, body, ready, shoulder, study, today, under, add, afraid, bad, bed, bird, could, would, end, friend, good, had, head, old, read, road, side.* (Notice also the past tense of verbs ending with a vowel, a weak consonant, and /t/, e.g. *owed əʊd, failed feɪld, started stɑ:tɪd.*)

/k/ and /g/

/k/ is a strong stop consonant and /g/ is a weak one. The position of the organs of speech for these sounds is shown in Figure 18.

#### NOTICE

1 The back of the tongue is in firm contact with the soft palate, and

- the soft palate is raised, so that the breath is trapped for a short time.
- When the tongue is lowered suddenly from the soft palate, the breath rushes out of the mouth with a slight explosion or popping noise.

The strong stop /k/ is aspirated in the same way as /p/ and /t/, and this may be shown in a similar way, e.g. *kʰu:l cool*. Put the tongue in position for /k/ and let the breath burst out in a voiceless /u:/. Do this several times before adding a normal vowel /u:/ after the voiceless one,

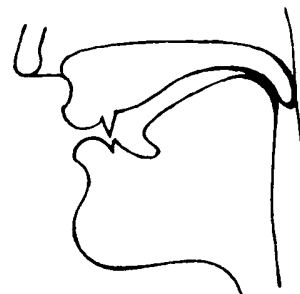



Fig. 18 /k/ and /g/

and be sure that the voiceless period, the aspiration, comes before the normal vowel each time. Then do the same thing with other vowels in: *kʰɔ:t, kʰɑ:t, kʰæt, kʰɪl, kʰi:p*. Now do the same thing with the following consonants in *kli:n, kri:m, kwi:n, kju:*, where the first part of the /l, r, w/ and /j/ comes out voiceless.


The speakers of some languages (e.g. Greek, Persian) may form the stop too far forward in the mouth, with the front of the tongue against the hard palate, before the vowels /e/ and /æ/. This is not a very dangerous mistake, but to English ears the result sounds like /kje/ and /kjæ/ rather than /ke/ and /kæ/, so that it should be avoided if possible. If you have this difficulty, say the words *kʌt cut* and *kɑ:t cart* very slowly several times and notice carefully where the tongue touches the soft palate. Then try to keep this position in words such as *kept kept, kemist chemist, kæt cat* and *kæn can*.

/g/ is short and weak and never aspirated; compare the following words (and do not forget the aspiration of /k/):


	keɪv cave	geɪv gave	kɑ:d card	gɑ:d guard
	kɜ:l curl	gɜ:l girl	kʊd could	gʊd good
	kæp cap	gæp gap	kəʊl coal	gəʊl goal
	kla:s class	glɑ:s glass	kraʊ crowd	grəʊ grow



As with /p/ and /t/, when /k/ occurs between vowels the aspiration may be weaker or even absent, but it may be kept in this position too. On the other hand /g/ is normally voiced in this position (and of course never aspirated), but concentrate mainly on making it gentle and short. Speakers who confuse /b/ and /d/ with /v/ and /ð/ in this position will also tend to make /g/ a friction sound instead of the correct stop sound. They must be sure to put the tongue into firm contact with the palate and let the breath out with a definite, though slight, explosion. Try these words:

	lɪkɪŋ	licking	dɪɡɪŋ	digging	lækɪŋ	lacking	læɡɪŋ	lagging
	wɪ:kə	weaker	i:gə	eager	θɪkə	thicker	bɪɡə	bigger
	mɑ:kɪt	market	tɑ:ɡɪt	target	æŋkəl	ankle	æŋɡəl	angle

In final position /k/ is aspirated and shortens the vowel before it, but /g/ is very, very gentle and lengthens the vowel before it. For both consonants there must be a definite explosion, a strong one for /k/ and a weak one for /g/; a closure without explosion or a simple friction is not correct. Try these words:

	pɪk	pick	pɪɡ	pig	dɒk	dock	dɒɡ	dog
	bæk	back	bæg	bag	lɒk	lock	lɒɡ	log
	leɪk	lake	pleɪɡ	plague	brəʊk	broke	rəʊɡ	rogue

When /k/ and /g/ are followed by any of the other stop consonants, /p, b, t, d/, or by /m/ or /n/, the sounds are made a little differently. This is dealt with on pp. 67–73.

Some of the commonest words containing /k/ are: *call, can, car, care, carry, case, catch, cause, kind, kitchen, kill, coal, coat, cold, come, cook, corner, count, country, cup, cut, because, become, box, breakfast, excuse, pocket, second, secret, walking (etc.), weaker (etc.), local, ask, back, black, book, break, dark, drink, lake, like, lock, make, mistake, music, neck, o'clock, quick, take.*

Some of the commonest words containing /g/ are: *game, garden, gate, get, girl, glass, go, good, grass, great, green, grey, ground, grow, guess, gun, again, against, ago, agree, angry, August, exact, forget, language, regular, together, longer, bigger (etc.), tiger, begin, bag, beg, big, dog, fog, leg, rug, plug, flag, drug.*

### /tʃ/ and /dʒ/

As the phonetic symbols suggest, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are stop consonants of a

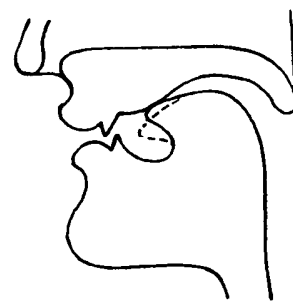



Fig. 19 /tʃ/ and /dʒ/

special kind. The air is trapped as for all the stop consonants, but it is released with definite friction of the /ʃ, ʒ/ kind. The position of the organs of speech for /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ is shown in Figure 19.


#### NOTICE

- 1 The tongue-tip touches the back part of the alveolar ridge, and the soft palate is raised so that the breath is trapped for a short time.
- 2 The rest of the tongue is in the /ʃ, ʒ/ position (see Figure 15).
- 3 The tongue-tip moves away from the alveolar ridge a little way (see the dotted lines in Figure 19), and the whole tongue is then in the /ʃ, ʒ/ position, so that a short period of this friction is heard. The friction of /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ is not so long as for /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ alone.


Start with /ʃ/: say a long /ʃ/ and then raise the tip of the tongue to the nearest part of the alveolar ridge and cut off the friction; then say /ʃ/ again by lowering the tongue-tip. Do this several times. Now start from the closed position, then release the tongue and say /ʃ/. This is /tʃ/. (English children imitate a steam engine by a series of /tʃ/-sounds.) Now try the word tʃi:p *cheap*, and don't make the /ʃ/ friction too long; it is rather shorter than in ʃi:p *sheep*. Like /ʃ/, /tʃ/ is a strong sound, whereas /dʒ/ is a weak one. Try /dʒ/ by making the friction very weak and shorter than for /tʃ/. Then try these words:

	tʃɪn	chin	dʒɪn	gin	tʃəʊk	choke	dʒəʊk	joke
	tʃɪə	cheer	dʒɪə	jeer	tʃeɪn	chain	dʒeɪn	Jane
	tʃɔɪs	choice	dʒɔɪs	Joyce	tʃest	chest	dʒest	jest


Between vowels /dʒ/ is normally voiced, but the important thing is to keep it weak and to keep the friction short: if you also voice it, so much the better. /tʃ/ is still strong and voiceless. Try these words:

 rɪtʃɪz riches	rɪdʒɪz ridges
kætʃɪŋ catching	kædʒɪŋ cadging
fetʃɪŋ fetching	edʒɪŋ edging
bætʃɪz batches	bædʒɪz badges
wɒtʃɪŋ watching	lɒdʒɪŋ lodging
kɪtʃən kitchen	pɪdʒən pigeons

In final position /tʃ/ is still strong and voiceless, and it shortens the vowel before it; /dʒ/ is very weak and short, and it lengthens the vowel before it. Try these words:

 rɪtʃ rich	rɪdʒ ridge	kætʃ catch	kædʒ cadge
sɜ:tʃ search	sɜ:dʒ surge	eɪtʃ H	eɪdʒ age
fetʃ fetch	edʒ edge	wɒtʃ watch	lɒdʒ lodge

There may be a danger for some speakers (e.g. Spaniards) of not distinguishing between /tʃ/ and /ʃ/, and between /dʒ/ and /ʒ/. These speakers must be careful to make a definite stop before the friction for /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, and no stop at all for /ʃ/ and /ʒ/. Practise with these words:

 ʃu: shoe	tʃu: chew
wɒʃɪŋ washing	wɒtʃɪŋ watching
wɪʃ wish	wɪtʃ witch
leɪʒə leisure	ledʒə ledger
ʃɒp shop	tʃɒp chop
kæʃɪŋ cashing	kætʃɪŋ catching
kæʃ cash	kætʃ catch
meɪʒə measure	meɪdʒə major

Some of the commonest words containing /tʃ/ are: *chair, chance, change, cheap, chief, child, choice, choose, church, fortune, future, kitchen, nature, picture, question, catch, each, March, much, reach, rich, speech, stretch, such, teach, touch, watch, which.*

Some of the commonest words containing /dʒ/ are: *general, gentleman, January, join, joke, journey, joy, judge, July, jump, June, just, danger, imagine, soldier, subject, age, arrange, bridge, edge, language, large, manage, message, page, strange, village.*

### 3.3 Nasal consonants

There are three phonemes in English which are represented by nasal consonants, /m, n, ŋ/. In all nasal consonants the soft palate is lowered

and at the same time the mouth passage is blocked at some point, so that all the air is pushed out of the nose.

/m/ and /n/

All languages have consonants which are similar to /m/ and /n/ in English. The position of the speech organs for these sounds is shown in Figures 20 and 21.

#### NOTICE

- 1 The soft palate is lowered for both /m/ and /n/.
- 2 For /m/ the mouth is blocked by closing the two lips, for /n/ by pressing the tip of the tongue against the alveolar ridge, and the sides of the tongue against the sides of the palate.
- 3 Both sounds are voiced in English, as they are in other languages, and the voiced air passes out through the nose.

Neither of these sounds will cause much difficulty to most speakers. In many languages /n/ is made with the tongue-tip on the teeth themselves

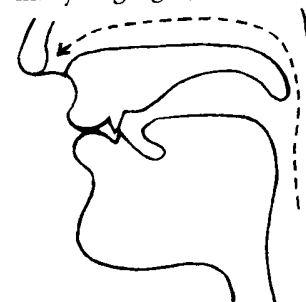


Fig. 20 /m/

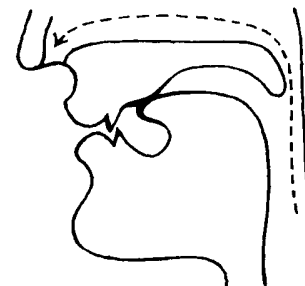


Fig. 21 /n/

rather than on the alveolar ridge, and this should be avoided if possible, but the use of a dental /n/ in English is hardly noticeable. Speakers of some languages (e.g. Portuguese, Yoruba) may have difficulty with these consonants in final position or before other consonants, for example in the words *can* kæn and *camp* kæmp. Instead of making a firm closure with the lips or tongue-tip so that all the breath goes through the nose, they may only lower the soft palate and *not* make a closure, so that some of the breath goes through the nose but the remainder goes through the mouth. When this happens we have a *nasalized vowel*. The word *can* would then be pronounced kæ̃, where æ̃ represents æ pronounced with the soft palate lowered, and *camp* would be kæ̃p. These speakers must be careful to close the lips firmly for /m/ and put the tongue-tip firmly in contact with the alveolar ridge for /n/ and be sure that the closure is completed every time one of these consonants occurs. Practise these words and make /m/ and /n/ rather long if you have this difficulty:



him	him	læm	lamb	ru:m	room	geɪm	game
limp	limp	læmp	lamp	lʌmp	lump	geɪmz	games
wʌn	one	tɪn	tin	su:n	soon	maɪn	mine
send	send	sent	sent	fɒnd	fond	sʌnz	sons

When /m/ or /n/ is found before another consonant, as in some of the examples above, the voiced or voiceless nature of the final consonant has an effect on the length of both the vowel *and* the nasal consonant: this is very similar to the lengthening or shortening of the vowel in examples like *seed/seat*. In the pairs of words below make the /m/ or /n/ quite long in the first word, before the gentle voiced consonant, and make it short in the second word, before the strong, voiceless consonant:



læmz	lambs	læmp	lamp
send	send	sent	sent
dʒɔɪnd	joined	dʒɔɪnt	joint
hʌmz	hums	hʌmp	hump
sɪnz	sins	sɪns	since
kəmpleɪnd	complained	kəmpleɪnt	complaint

/n/ is often syllabic: that is, it occupies the place at the centre of the syllable which usually is occupied by a vowel. Both the words *lesser* and *lesson* have two syllables: in *lesser* the second syllable is /-sə/, and in *lesson* the second syllable is often /-sɪ/ (/ɪ/ means that /n/ is syllabic)

though the word may also be pronounced lesən, with a vowel *between* the /s/ and the /n/. This is true of all the following words, and you may pronounce them with or without the vowel before the /n/. If you leave out the vowel the /n/ will have the same length as the final vowel in lesə. Try these:



pɜ:sɒn	person	ri:zɒn	reason	i:vən	even	ɒfən	often
fæʃn	fashion	əkeɪʒən	occasion	ri:dʒən	region	kɪtʃn	kitchen

In words such as *written*, *garden* a syllabic /ŋ/ is almost always used immediately after the /t/ or /d/, that is rɪtɪŋ, ɡɑ:dɪŋ. This requires a special pronunciation of /t/ and /d/ and is dealt with on p. 70.

English people sometimes pronounce a syllabic /m/ in words like *blossom*, *rhythm* blɒsəm, rɪðəm, but more often they are pronounced blɒsəm, rɪðəm, and that is what you should do.

Some of the commonest words containing /m/ are: *make, man, many, marry, matter, may, me, mean, meat, middle, mind, money, more, mouth, move, much, must, my, almost, among, common, complete, family, promise, remember, simple, summer, tomorrow, woman, am, arm, become, come, farm, form, from, him, home, room, same, seem, some, swim, them, time, warm, welcome*.

Some of the commonest words containing /n/ are: *name, near, nearly, need, neither, never, new, next, nice, night, nine, no, noise, nose, north, notice, now, number, know, knee, and, answer, any, behind, country, dinner, enough, finish, funny, general, journey, manner, many, penny, since, un-, went, winter, again, alone, been, begin, between, can, done, down, green, in, join, learn, on, one, rain, run, skin, son, soon, sun, -teen, ten, than, then*.

### /ŋ/

This is the third English nasal consonant and the only one likely to cause trouble, because many languages do not have a consonant formed like /ŋ/. The position of the speech organs for /ŋ/ is shown in Figure 22.

#### NOTICE

- 1 The soft palate is lowered and all the air passes out through the nose.
- 2 The mouth is blocked by the back of the tongue pressed against the soft palate.
- 3 The sound is voiced.

Remember first of all that the letters *ng* in words like *sing* represent only

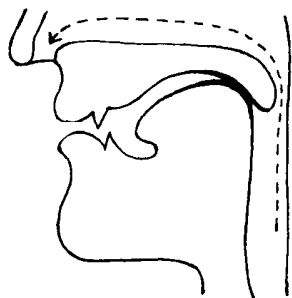


Fig. 22 /ŋ/

one sound for most English speakers: a few use two sounds and pronounce the word *siŋg*, so if you do this it will be perfectly well understood and it is better to pronounce *siŋg* than to confuse this word with *sin*. But it is better still to pronounce *siŋ* as most English speakers do. Your mirror will be useful: /ŋ/ has the same tongue position as /g/, so start with /g/ and hold this position with the mouth wide open. Notice that the tip of the tongue is low in the mouth and that the back of the tongue is high. Hold this mouth position and at the same time start the humming note that you get with /m/ and /n/. Be sure that the mouth position does not change, and that the tip of the tongue does not rise at all. Continue the sound for three seconds, watching closely, then stop and start again. Keep your mouth wide open each time so that you can see that the tongue is in the right position. At the end of the sound just let it die away into silence with no suggestion of /g/. When you can do this easily, do the same thing with the teeth closer together in a more normal position, but be sure that the tip of the tongue stays in its low position. Now try the following words: make the final /ŋ/ long and let it die away into silence:



siŋ sing	sæŋ sang	sɒŋ song	sʌŋ sung
riŋ ring	ræŋ rang	rɒŋ wrong	rʌŋ rung

/ŋ/ does not occur at the beginning of words in English, but it does occur between vowels, where it is more difficult than in final position. The difficulty is to avoid putting in a /g/ after the /ŋ/, and pronouncing *siŋgə* instead of *siŋə*. If you do pronounce *siŋgə* it does not matter very much because some English speakers also do it; but most do not, so the /g/ should be avoided if possible. Go from the /ŋ/ to the following vowel very smoothly, with no jerk or bang. Try these examples, slowly at first, then more quickly:



siŋə singer	lɒŋ əgəʊ long ago
hæŋ ʌp hang up	rɒŋ əgen wrong again
siŋiŋ singing	hæŋiŋ hanging
brɪŋ it bring it	əməŋ ʌðəz among others
lɒŋiŋ longing	bæŋiŋ banging

The most important thing is to keep /n/ and /ŋ/ separate and not to confuse them. Try the following pairs and be careful to keep the tongue-tip down for /n/:



sin sin	siŋ sing	sʌn son	sʌŋ sung
ræn ran	ræŋ rang	sɪnə sinner	siŋə singer
tʌnz tons	tʌŋz tongues		

In some words /g/ is normally pronounced after /ŋ/ before a following vowel, for example in *æŋgə* *anger*, *fɪŋgə* *finger*. A useful general rule is that if the word is formed from a *verb*, no /g/ is pronounced, as with *siŋə*, *hæŋiŋ*, but if not, /g/ is pronounced, as in *strɒŋgə*, formed from the adjective *strɒŋ* *strong*, and *æŋgə* *anger*, which is not formed out of a shorter word. Notice the difference between *lɒŋgə* *longer* formed from the adjective *long*, and *lɒŋiŋ* *longing* formed from the verb *long*. /g/ is never pronounced before a following consonant, for example: *siŋz* *sings*, *bæŋd* *banged*.

If you have the tendency to nasalize the vowel instead of pronouncing /ŋ/, mentioned on p. 50, you must be very careful to make a firm contact with the back of the tongue and force all the air to go through the nose.

Some of the commonest words containing /ŋ/ are: *anger*, *anxious*, *drink*, *finger*, *hungry*, *language*, *sink*, *thank*, *think*, *among(st)*, *bring*, *during*, *evening*, *hang*, *-ing*, *long*, *morning*, *ring*, *sing*, *song*, *spring*, *string*, *strong*, *thing*, *wrong*, *young*.

### 3.4 Lateral consonant

One English consonant /l/ – is formed laterally, that is, instead of the breath passing down the centre of the mouth, it passes round the sides of an obstruction set up in the centre. The position of the organs of speech for /l/ as in *li:v* *live* is shown in Figure 23.

#### NOTICE

- 1 The soft palate is raised.
- 2 The tongue-tip (and the sides of the tongue-blade which cannot be

seen in the diagram) are in firm contact with the alveolar ridge, obstructing the centre of the mouth.

- 3 The sides of the remainder of the tongue are not in contact with the sides of the palate, so air can pass between the sides of the tongue and the palate, round the central obstruction formed by the tip and blade of the tongue and so out of the mouth.

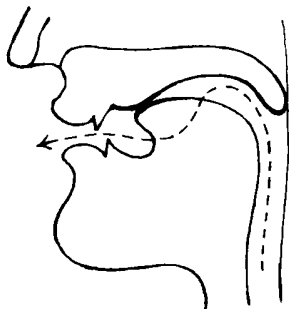



Fig. 23 /l/ as in *liv*

- 4 The sound is voiced and there is no friction (except when it is immediately after /p/ or /k/ see pp. 40 and 45).

Most languages have a sound like English /l/, at least before vowels, and this can be used in such words as *li:v leave*, *la:st last*, *lʊk look*, *fɒləʊ follow*. Some languages, however (Japanese, for instance), do not have a satisfactory /l/ and such students must be very careful to make a firm contact of the tongue-tip and the sides of the blade with the alveolar ridge. If this is difficult for you try biting the tongue-tip firmly between top and bottom teeth; this will make a central obstruction and the air will be forced to pass over the sides of the tongue. In passing to the vowel the tongue-tip is removed from the alveolar ridge quite suddenly and the sound ends sharply; it may help to put in a very quick /d/-sound between the /l/ and the following vowel: *l'di:v leave*, etc.

Practise the following words, making the /l/ long and the central obstruction very firm to begin with:

 li:f leaf	letə letter	lɒst lost	lu:s loose
lɜ:n learn	leɪt late	laɪk like	laʊd loud

When you are satisfied with /l/ in this position try these words, and be sure that the contact of the tongue-tip with the alveolar ridge is complete:



fi:lɪŋ feeling  
feləʊ fellow  
fu:lɪʃ foolish

həleɪdɪ holiday  
brli:v believe  
əlaʊ allow

Once you have a satisfactory /l/ before vowels you can use it in *all* positions without fear of being misunderstood; but many English people use different /l/-sounds before vowels and in other positions. For any /l/ the tongue-tip makes the usual firm contact, but before consonants and in final position the remainder of the tongue takes up a shape like that required for the vowel /ʊ/ or /ɔ:/; before vowels the remainder of the tongue is placed as for the vowel /ɪ/. So the /l/ has a different 'colouring' in the two cases.

Make the tongue-tip contact firmly, and hold it whilst you say /ɪ/ as in *sit* the two things must go on *at the same time*, not one after the other; this is the /l/ before vowels and it is known as the *clear* /l/. Now hold the contact firmly still and at the same time say the vowel /ʊ/, as in *put*; this is the /l/ before consonants and in final positions, e.g. in *fil* *fill* and *fiɪd* *filled*, and it is called the *dark* /l/. Many English speakers use only a clear /l/ in all positions, and many others use only a dark /l/ which is why it is not very important for you to learn both but most speakers of the kind of English described here do use both kinds of /l/. The words given for practice above would all contain clear /l/, because a vowel immediately follows (and this is true whether the vowel is in the same word or not, so both *fi:lɪŋ* and *fi:l* it have clear /l/).


Whether or not you decide to use the English dark /l/ in the positions mentioned, some of you (e.g. Japanese, Cantonese) will need to be very careful with /l/ before consonants and in final position. The danger, and it is greater here than elsewhere, is that you do not make a firm contact of the tongue-tip with the alveolar ridge, the result being either some sort of vowel sound *fiʊ* and *fiʊd* for *fill* and *filled*, or some sort of /r/-sound *fɪr* and *fɪrd*. The sound in English, whether it is dark or clear, must be a lateral, it must have the firm central obstruction and air escaping over the sides of the tongue. In the words below make the /l/ very carefully and be sure that the tongue tip makes full and firm contact.




ɔ:l all	fʊl full	tu:l tool	sel sell
bɪl bill	fi:l feel	teɪl tail	maɪl mile
aʊl owl	ɔ:l oil	kɔ:lɪd called	pʊlz pulls
fu:lz fools	belt belt	fi:ld field	kəʊld cold
maɪlz miles			

/l/ is very often syllabic, like /n/ (p. 50), that is, it occurs in a position more usually occupied by a vowel; in words such as *parcel*, *level*, *puzzle*, *lethal*, *ruffle* most English people would pronounce *pɑ:səl*, *levl*, *pʌzl*, *li:θl*, *rʌfl* with syllabic /l/, but it is also possible to pronounce *pɑ:səl*, etc., so do whichever is easiest.

After the stop consonants, however, as in *trouble*, *apple*, *bottle*, *middle*, *eagle*, it is less desirable to have a vowel between the stop and the /l/. Start with *apple* /æpl/: as soon as the lips are opened the /l/ is sounded immediately. Do the same with *trabl*. For *tækl*, hold the /k/ until the tip of the tongue is firmly in position for /l/, then release /k/. Do the same with *i:gl*. When /l/ follows /t/ and /d/, the stop sounds have a special release, which is dealt with on p. 72. If a vowel creeps in between any of the stop consonants and /l/, you will not be misunderstood, but this is not the usual English habit. Syllabic /l/ is usually dark /l/, but again the most important thing is to make an /l/-sound of some sort. Other examples of words containing syllabic /l/ are:

 bju:təf  beautiful	kæm  camel
ɔ:f  awful	kʌp  couple
træv  travel	bʌɪb  Bible
wɪs  whistle	tʃʌk  chuckle
dæz  dazzle	gɪɡ  giggle
tʃæn  channel	

Some students (e.g. Cantonese) may have difficulty in distinguishing between /l/ and /n/ in initial position; this leads to pronouncing *laɪf* *life* as *naɪf* *knife* or *nɒt* *not* as *lɒt* *lot*, and must be avoided. Remember that /n/ is entirely nasal, all the air goes out of the nose; but /l/ is entirely oral, all the air goes out of the mouth. Try this: say a long /n/, and, whilst you are saying it, nip your nostrils so that the air cannot escape from the nose; this will interrupt the sound. Now say /l/ and do the same thing: if you are making /l/ correctly there will be no change at all; if there is a change it means that some air, or perhaps all the air, is passing through the nose, which is wrong for /l/. Do the same thing with a long /s/, and notice that nipping the nose makes no difference to the sound; then try /l/ again, until you are sure that you can always make it without any air going through the nose. It will be helpful to think of a slight /d/-sound in going from the /l/ to the following vowel, as mentioned above *l<sup>d</sup>aɪf*, *l<sup>d</sup>ɒt*, etc. When you are sure that your /n/ is entirely nasal and your /l/ entirely oral, practise distinguishing these pairs:

 ləʊ low	nəʊ no	li:d lead	ni:d need
laɪt light	naɪt night	leɪbə labour	neɪbə neighbour
let let	net net	lɪp lip	nɪp nip


Some of the commonest words containing /l/ are: *lady*, *land*, *language*, *last*, *late*, *laugh*, *lead*, *learn*, *leave*, *left*, *less*, *let*, *like*, *listen*, *little*, *live*, *long*, *lot*, *lack*, *lose*, *love*, *low*, *allow*, *along*, *almost*, *already*, *always*, *cold*, *colour*, *difficult*, *early*, *eleven*, *else*, *fault* -ly, *help*, *o'clock*, *old*, *self*, *yellow*, *able*, *all*, *beautiful*, *fall*, *feel*, *fill*, *full*, *girl*, *meal*, *mile*, *parcel*, *people*, *possible*, *real*, *school*, *shall*, *still*, *table*, *tell*, *until*, *well*.

### 3.5 Gliding consonants


There are three consonants which consist of a quick, smooth, non-friction glide towards a following vowel sound, the consonants /j/, w, r/.

/j/

This consonant is a quick glide from the position of the vowel /i:/ or /ɪ/ to any other vowel. We usually transcribe the word *yes* as *jes*, but we might easily transcribe it *i:es* or *ies*, on the understanding that the /i:/ or /ɪ/ is very short and that we move smoothly and quickly to the following /e/. Try the following words in that way, and be sure that there is no friction in the /j/-glide:

 ja:d yard	jet yet
jɒt yacht	ju: you
jɔ: your	

The same is true in the following words where /j/ is not initial; make a quick, weak /i:/-sound before the following vowel:

 bju:tɪ beauty	dju: due	fju: few	vju: view
vælju: value	nju: new	mju:zɪk music	

When /j/ follows /p, t, k/ it loses the voice which it usually has, and is made voiceless; this causes some friction to be heard, and it is important to do this because otherwise the stop consonants may be heard as /b, d, g/, and the word *tune* tju:n confused with *dune* dju:n. Try the following words, making /j/ in the same way as before *except* that you let breath take the place of voice:



tʃu:zdi Tuesday	kəmpju:tə computer
tʃu:n tune	kju: queue
pjʊə pure	əkju:z accuse

Some English people use /tʃ/ instead of /tj/ and /dʒ/ instead of /dj/, pronouncing tʃu:zdi instead of tjʊ:zdi Tuesday, and dʒu: instead of dju: due, but this is not generally accepted and should be avoided.

Most American speakers do not use /j/ in words where it would follow /t, d, n, l, s, θ/, pronouncing tu:n tune, du: due, nu: new, æbsəlu:t absolute, su:t suit, and ɪnθu:zɪæzəm enthusiasm. R.P. speakers always use /j/ after /t, d, n/ in such words, but some do not use it after /l, s, θ/. If your model is American, do not pronounce /j/ after these consonants; if not, it is probably better to use /j/ after all of them. /j/ does not occur in final position.

Some of the commonest words containing /j/ are: yard, year, yellow, yes, yesterday, yet, you, young, your, use, usual, useful, Europe, amuse, beautiful, cure, during, duty, educate, excuse, failure, few, huge, January, knew, music, new, suit, Tuesday, value.

/w/

This consonant consists of a quick glide from the vowel /u:/ or /ʊ/ to whatever vowel follows. It is much more difficult than /j/ because many languages do not have an independent /w/. But it is not difficult to learn to say. Start with /u:/ or /ʊ/ and follow this immediately by the vowel /ɔ:/ this is the word wɔ: war. The /w/ part must be short and weak, as with /j/, but the lips must be rounded quite firmly even English people move their lips noticeably for /w/!

Try these words in the same way, beginning each with a very short weak /u:/ or /ʊ/ with the lips well rounded:



wɒtʃ watch	wɪn win	weə where
wet wet	wi: we	wʊd wood
wart white	wert wait	wʊl wool

When /w/ follows a consonant it is made in the same way; but the lips are rounded ready for /w/ before the previous consonant is finished. So in swi:t sweet the lips gradually become rounded during the /s/, and when it ends they are firmly rounded ready for /w/. This is true for all the following words; try them:



swi:t sweet	swɪm swim	swet sweat
sweə swear	dweliŋ dwelling	

You must remember too that when /w/ immediately follows /t/ or /k/ the glide is not voiced, though the lips are again rounded during the stop consonant. Try the following words, round the lips early, and blow out breath through them:



twɔ: twice	twenti twenty	twelv twelve	twin twin
kwɔ:t quite	kwɪk quick	kwɔ:t quiet	kwɪ:n queen

/w/ is particularly difficult for those (like Germans, Dutch, many Indians) who have a sound like English /v/ but none like /w/. These speakers tend to replace /w/ by /v/ and say vel instead of wel well. This must be avoided and you can do this by concentrating on pairs like those below. For the /v/ words, keep the lips flat and use the upper teeth to make some friction; for the /w/ words there is no friction and the lips are well rounded.



vɜ:s verse	wɜ:s worse	vɔ:n vine	wɔ:n wine
vi:l veal	wi:l wheel	vɔ:l vile	wɔ:l while
veəri vary	weəri wary	vei veil	weɪl wail

When you are able to make /w/ easily, be careful not to use it instead of /v/. It is just as bad to say weɪ for very as to say vel for well.

Now try the following similar pairs with the /w/ and the /v/ between vowels, taking care to make a good difference:



riwɔ:d reward	rɪvi:l reveal
fɔ:wəd forward	hɒvəd hovered
əweɪ away	əveɪl avail
haɪweɪ highway	daɪvə diver

Words such as which, when, where, why (but not who) are pronounced with simple /w/ in R.P.: wɪtʃ, wen, weə, waɪ, etc. In some other kinds of English (e.g. American, Scottish, Irish) they begin with /hw/. If your model is one of these, you can begin these words with a completely voiceless /w/ instead of the voiced one.

/w/ does not occur in final position.

Some of the commonest words containing /w/ are: one, wait, walk, want, warm, wash, watch, water, way, we, week, well, wet, what, when, why, will, wish, with, woman, word, work, always, away, between, quarter, question, quick, quite, sweet, swim, twelve, twenty, twice.

/r/

This is the third of the gliding consonants, but it does not resemble one

of the English vowels as /j/ and /w/ do. The position of the speech organs for /r/ is shown in Figure 24.

## NOTICE

- 1 The tongue has a curved shape with the tip pointing towards the hard palate at the back of the alveolar ridge, the front low and the back rather high.
- 2 The tongue-tip is not close enough to the palate to cause friction.
- 3 The lips are rather rounded, especially when /r/ is at the beginning of words.
- 4 The soft palate is raised; and voiced air flows quietly between the tongue-tip and palate with no friction.

Foreign learners often replace this sound by the sound which is represented by the letter *r* in their own language. Sometimes they use a *rolled* sound in which the tip of the tongue taps very quickly several times against the alveolar ridge (Italian, Arabic, Russian) or the uvula taps against the back of the tongue in a similar way (Dutch, French, German). Sometimes they use a friction sound with the back of the tongue close to the soft palate and uvula (Danish, French, German). Such sounds are perfectly well understood by English people, but of course they sound foreign.

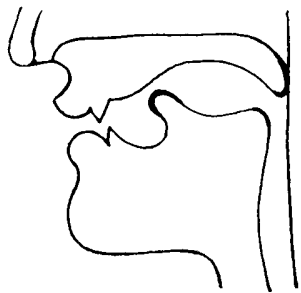


Fig. 24 /r/

Try approaching the English sound from a /w/. Get the speech organs ready for /w/ (remember that this is a short /ʊ/-or /u:/-sound), and then curl the tip of the tongue back until it is pointing at the hard palate, quite a long way behind the alveolar ridge. Now change smoothly and without friction to the following vowel, as in *red*. Be careful, if you have an /r/-sound in your language, not to make it at the same time as the English sound: try to think of English /r/ as a new

## Gliding consonants

sound altogether. Try these words and be sure that the tongue-tip is well back in the mouth at the beginning of the glide:



ri:d	read	red	red	rʌn	run	rɔ: rɔ:	raw
ru:d	rude	reɪs	race	raʊnd	round	reə	rare

Between vowels the sound is the same except that the lips are not rounded. Try the following, and concentrate on getting the tongue-tip up and back, then smoothly down and forward again:



veri	very	mæri	marry	bɔrəʊ	borrow	həri	hurry
əraɪv	arrive	kərekt	correct	əraʊnd	around	ərest	arrest

In R.P. /r/ only occurs before vowels, never before consonants, so words like *learn*, *sort*, *farm* do not contain /r/ (lɜ:n, sɔ:t, fɑ:m). Other varieties of English pronounce /r/ in these words (e.g. American, Irish, Scottish), so if your model is one of these, you will pronounce /r/ before consonants; if it is R.P. you will not. At the end of words R.P. has /r/ only if the immediately following word begins with a vowel; so the word *never*, if it occurs before a pause or before a word beginning with a consonant (as in *never better*), is pronounced *nevə* with no /r/ in R.P. But in *never again* where it is immediately followed by a vowel /r/ is pronounced, *nevər əgen*. This is called the *linking /r/*; some R.P. speakers do not use it (and say *nevə əgen*), so you may do this if you find it easier, but most people do use it.

Try these phrases, either with or without the /r/:




betər ɒf	better off	hɪər ɪt ɪz	here it is
fɔ:r ɔ: faɪv	four or five	pʊər əʊld tɒm	poor old Tom


It is quite usual to hear this linking /r/ following the vowel /ə/ even when there is no letter *r* in the spelling, as in *Africa* and *Asia* æfrɪkər ən eɪʃə, *Linda* and *Ann* lɪndər ən æn. Some English speakers dislike this so-called 'intrusive /r/', so it is perhaps best for you not to use it. You may also hear it after the vowel /ɔ:/ as in *I saw a man* aɪ sɔ: r ə mæn, but here very many English speakers disapprove of it, and you should not use it.

There is danger of confusing /r/ with /l/ (e.g. for Cantonese and Japanese speakers) and also with /n/ (Cantonese). Remember that for /n/ and /l/ there is a very firm contact of the tongue-tip with the alveolar ridge (/n/ being nasal, and /l/ oral, see p. 56), but for /r/ the tongue-tip does not touch the palate at all – it is purely a gliding sound, with no sudden change. Try the following, and concentrate on the very firm contact for /l/ and /n/, and a smooth glide (like /w/) for /r/:



 lɑ:t light	nɑ:t night	rɑ:t right
ləʊ low	nəʊ no	rəʊ row
li:d lead	ni:d need	ri:d read
lɒk lock	nɒk knock	rɒk rock

The difficulty is greatest between vowels, so be most careful with the following:

 belɪ belly	benɪ Bennie	berɪ berry
kɔ:l əs call us	kɔ:nəz corners	kɔ:rəs chorus
spɪl ɪt spill it	spɪn ɪt spin it	spɪrɪt spirit
telə teller	tenə tenor	terə terror


After /p, t, k/ there is no voice in /r/. The tongue position is the same, but pure breath is pushed through the space between the tongue-tip and the hard palate, causing friction. Try with /p/ first; close the lips for /p/, then put the tongue in position for /r/, and, as the lips open for /p/, push breath strongly over the tongue-tip so that you can hear friction before the following vowel:

 prɛɪ pray	praʊd proud
præm pram	kəmpres compress
əpru:v approve	dɪpraɪv deprive

Now try /kr/: take up the position for /k/; then put the tongue-tip in position for /r/ and, when the /k/ is released, push breath through to cause friction:


 kri:m cream	krʊəl cruel
kræk crack	ɪŋkri:s increase
ɹɪkru:t recruit	dɪkri:s decrease

When /t/ occurs before /r/, the tongue-tip for /t/ is placed *behind* the alveolar ridge, on the front of the hard palate, so that when it is removed the tongue is immediately in position for the friction of /r/. Be sure that in the following words the tongue-tip is a good deal further back than usual for /t/:


 tri: tree	traɪ try	tru: true	trəst trust
ətrækt attract	ɹɪtri:t retreat	ɪntru:d intrude	

This /tr/ combination may be confused with /tʃ/; notice that the friction of the voiceless /r/ is *lower* in pitch than that of /ʃ/. Try the


following pairs and be careful to put the tongue-tip in the correct /r/ position for /tr/:

 tru: true	tʃu: chew	trɪp trip	tʃɪp chip
treɪn train	tʃeɪn chain	træp trap	tʃæp chap

In the combination /dr/ too the tip of the tongue is further back than usual for /d/ and there is friction as the voiced air passes over the tongue-tip for the /r/. Try these words:

 dri:m dream	draɪ dry	dres dress	drɒp drop
drɔ: draw	dru:p droop	ədres address	

And the following pairs must be distinguished in the same way as /tr/ and /tʃ/:

 dreɪn drain	dʒeɪn Jane	drɔ: draw	dʒɔ: jaw
dru: drew	dʒu: Jew	drʌŋk drunk	dʒʌŋk junk

Some of the commonest words containing /r/ are: *rain, rather, reach, read, ready, real, red, remember, rest, right, road, roof, room, round, rule, run, write, wrong, agree, already, arrange, borrow, bread, bring, cross, direct, dress, drink, every, foreign, from, great, interest, marry, pretty, price, serious, sorry, story, terrible, true, try, very, worry.*

### 3.6 Exercises

- Study each section carefully and decide what your difficulties are. Which of these difficulties are *phoneme* difficulties (e.g. confusing /s/ and /θ/ or /t/ and /d/), and which are purely *sound* difficulties (e.g. pronouncing /t/ with the tongue-tip on the teeth instead of on the alveolar ridge)? Which difficulties will you concentrate on?
- During the time which you give to listening to English, concentrate for a short time on listening to *one* of your difficulties (perhaps the difference between /s/ and /θ/, or the sound of /h/). When you have really *heard* the sound(s), go back to the lists of words in the different sections and try to make the sound exactly the same as you heard. Use a tape-recorder to help you, if you can.
- Take any passage of English and mark any one of your difficulties all the way through (e.g. underline every *l* or *r* or both). Then read the passage aloud, and try to say particular sounds perfectly. Don't worry about the others at that moment. Gradually do this for *all* your difficulties.
- Do a little practice *each day* if you possibly can.

## 4.4 Exercises

- 1 Does your language have sequences of two, three, four or more consonants? If so, list the ones which are similar to English sequences.
- 2 Does your language have stop + stop sequences? Practise again the examples on p. 69.
- 3 Be sure that you can distinguish the following: spy, espy; state, estate; scape, escape; support, sport; succumb, scum; polite, plight; terrain, train; below, blow; strange, estrange; ascribe, scribe; esquire, squire; astute, stewed; ticket, ticked; wrapped, rapid, wrap it.
- 4 Does your language have nasal explosion (p. 70) or lateral explosion (p. 72)? Practise those examples again.
- 5 Practise again all the other examples in this chapter, being very careful to follow the instructions given. Finish with the longer sequences on p. 77.

## 5 The vowels of English

Vowels are made by voiced air passing through different mouth-shapes; the differences in the shape of the mouth are caused by different positions of the tongue and of the lips. It is easy to see and to feel the lip differences, but it is very difficult to see or to feel the tongue differences, and that is why a detailed description of the tongue position for a certain vowel does not really help us to pronounce it well.

Vowels must be learned by *listening and imitating*: I could tell you that the English vowel /ɔ:/ as in *saw* is made by rounding the lips and by placing the back of the tongue in a position mid-way between the highest possible and the lowest possible position, but it would be much more helpful if I could simply say the sound for you and get you to imitate me. Since I cannot do this I must leave the listening and imitating to you. So spend some of your listening time on the vowels.

As I said at the beginning of chapter 3 English speakers vary quite a lot in their vowel sounds; the vowels used by an Australian, an American and a Scotsman in the word *see* are all different, but they are all recognized quite easily as /i:/. So the actual sounds that you use for the English vowels are not so important as the differences that you make between them. There must be *differences between* the vowels, and that is what we will concentrate on

### 5.1 Simple vowels

/i:, ɪ, e/

In your language you will have a vowel which is like the English /i:/ in *see*, and one which is like the English /ɪ/ in *sun*, and almost certainly one which is like the English /e/ in *get*. They may not be *exactly* the same as the English vowels you hear in listening to English, but they will do for a starting-point. Say the words bi:d *bead* and bed *bed* several times and listen carefully to the sound of the vowels; then try to say a vowel which is *between* the other two, and different from both, not bi:d and not bed, but . . . bid – that will be the vowel in *bid*. You need

three different vowels for the three words *bead*, *bid* and *bed*. Be sure that the middle vowel is *different* and *between* the other two: one thing which will help you to distinguish /i:/ from /ɪ/ is that /i:/ is longer than /ɪ/ as well as different in the quality of the sound. Practise those three words (and listen for them in English) until you are sure that you can keep them separate. The most likely difficulty is that you will confuse /i:/ with /ɪ/, so be sure that /ɪ/ is nearer in quality to /e/ and that it is always shorter than /i:/.

Remember that when the vowels are followed by a strong consonant they are shorter than when they are followed by a weak consonant, so that *beat*, *bit* and *bet* all have shorter vowels than *bead*, *bid* and *bed*, but even so the vowel /i:/ is always longer than the vowels /ɪ/ and /e/ in any one set. Now practise the following sets and pay attention to both the length of the vowels and their quality:

li:d	lead	lɪd	lid	led	led
wi:t	wheat	wɪt	wit	wet	wet
bi:n	been	bɪn	bin	ben	Ben
tʃi:k	cheek	tʃɪk	chick	tʃek	check
fi:l	feel	fɪl	fill	fel	fell
ri:tʃ	reach	rɪtʃ	rich	retʃ	wretch

/e, æ, ʌ/

Now you need another vowel between /e/ and /ʌ/, that is the vowel /æ/. Say the words *bed*, *bed* and *bad*, *bud* several times and be sure that your mouth is quite wide open for the vowel of *bad*. Listen to the vowels carefully and then try to say a vowel which is *between* those two, a vowel which sounds a bit like /e/ and a bit like /ʌ/ but which is different from both. You *must* have different vowels in *bed*, *bad* and *bud*. Practise those three words until you can always make a difference between them; they all have comparatively short vowels so that length differences will not help you here.

Practise the following sets and be sure that each word really sounds different:

ten	ten	tæn	tan	tʌn	ton
bet	bet	bæt	bat	bʌt	but
pen	pen	pæn	pan	pʌn	pun
seks	sex	sæks	sacks	sʌks	sucks
ded	dead	dæd	Dad	dʌd	dud
mej	mesh	mæʃ	mash	mʌʃ	mush

/i:, ɪ, e, æ, ʌ/

Now try all five of these vowels in the sets given below: you will see that there are gaps in some of the sets, where no word exists, for instance there is no word *lek*; but for practice you can fill in the gaps too. Some of the words are rather uncommon, but don't worry about the meanings – just be sure that the vowel sounds are different:

bi:d	bead	bɪd	bid	bed	bed	bæd	bad	bʌd	bud
li:k	leak	lɪk	lick			læk	lack	lʌk	luck
hi:l	heel	hɪl	hill	hel	hell	hæl	Hal	hʌl	hull
ti:n	teen	tɪn	tin	ten	ten	tæn	tan	tʌn	ton
ni:t	neat	nɪt	knit	net	net	næt	gnat	nʌt	nut
li:st	least	lɪst	list	lest	lest			lʌst	lust
ri:m	ream	rɪm	rim			ræm	ram	rʌm	rum
bi:t	beat	bɪt	bit	bet	bet	bæt	bat	bʌt	but

/ʌ, ɑ:, ɒ/

In England when the doctor wants to look into your mouth and examine your throat he asks you to say *Ah*, that is the vowel /ɑ:/, because for this vowel the tongue is very low and he can see over it to the back of the palate and the pharynx. So if you have no vowel exactly like /ɑ:/ in your language you may find a mirror useful – keep your mouth wide open and play with various vowel sounds until you find one which allows you to see the very back of the soft palate quite clearly; this will be similar to an English /ɑ:/, but you must compare it with the /ɑ:/ vowels that you hear when you listen to English and adjust your sound if necessary. Remember that /ɑ:/ is a long vowel. The short vowel /ɒ/ is a bit like /ɑ:/ in quality though of course they must be kept separate. For /ɒ/ the lips may be slightly rounded, for /ɑ:/ they are not. Try the following sets:

lʌk	luck	lɑ:k	lark	lɒk	lock
kʌd	cud	kɑ:d	card	kɒd	cod
dʌk	duck	dɑ:k	dark	dɒk	dock
lʌst	lust	lɑ:st	last	lɒst	lost
bʌks	bucks	bɑ:ks	barks	bɒks	box
kʌp	cup	kɑ:p	carp	kɒp	cop

/ɒ, ɔ:, ʊ, u:/

In your language there will be a vowel which is similar to the English

/u:/ in *two*. The /u:/ in English, like /i:/ and /ɑ:/, is always longer than the other vowels. Between /ɒ/ and /u:/ you need to make two other vowels, /ɔ:/, a long one, as in /lɔ:/ *law*, and /ʊ/, a short one, as in *put* *put*. For /ɔ:/ the mouth is less open than for /ɒ/ and the lips are more rounded, but /ɔ:/ is nearer in quality to /ɒ/ than to /u:/. For /ʊ/ the lips are also rounded, but the sound is nearer in quality to /u:/. All four vowels, /ɒ, ɔ:, ʊ, u:/, must be kept separate, and the differences of length will help in this. Try the following sets:



ʃɒd	shod	ʃɔ:d	shored	ʃʊd	should	ʃu:d	shoed
kɒd	cod	kɔ:d	cord	kʊd	could	ku:d	cooed
wɒd	wad	wɔ:d	ward	wʊd	would	wu:d	wooded
lɒk	lock			lʊk	look	lu:k	Luke
pɒl	Poll	pɔ:l	Paul	pʊl	pull	pu:l	pool

/ɜ:, ɑ:/

The vowel /ɜ:/ as in /hɜ:/ *her* is a long vowel which is not very close in quality to any of the other vowels and usually sounds rather vague and indistinct to the foreign learner. You must listen to the vowel especially carefully and try to imitate the indistinctness of it (though to an English listener it sounds quite distinct!). Two things will help: keep your teeth quite close together and do not round your lips at all – smile when you say it! The two commonest mistakes with /ɜ:/ are, first, to replace it by /er/ or by some vowel in your own language which has lip-rounding but which is not likely to be confused with any other English vowel, and second, and more important, it is replaced by /ɑ:/ by Japanese speakers and speakers of many African languages and others. In the first case there is no danger of misunderstanding although the vowel will sound strange; in the second case there is danger of misunderstanding, since words like hɜ:t *hurt* and hɑ:t *heart* will be confused.

In your listening-time pay special attention to /ɜ:/ and experiment (always with teeth close together and a smile on your face) until you approach the right quality; then make sure that you can distinguish it from /ɑ:/ which has the teeth further apart in the following pairs:



pɜ:s	purse	pɑ:s	pass	bɜ:n	burn	bɑ:n	barn
hɜ:d	heard	hɑ:d	hard	fɜ:m	firm	fɑ:m	farm
pɜ:tʃt	perched	pɑ:tʃt	parched	lɜ:ks	lurks	lɑ:ks	larks

/ə/

The vowel /ə/ in bənɑ:nə *banana* is the commonest of the English

vowels and is a short version of /ɜ:/. It is particularly short and indistinct when it is not final, e.g. in əgen *again*, kəntein *contain*, pəustmən *postman*. In final position, that is before a pause, as in betə *better*, eɪʃə *Asia*, kɒlə *collar*, the vowel sounds more like /ʌ/, though it is not usually so clear.

There are two main difficulties with this vowel: first, to identify it, that is, to know when it is this vowel you should be aiming at; and second, to get the right quality. In the first case, do not be deceived by English spelling: there is no single letter which always stands for this vowel, so rely on your ear – listen very carefully and you will hear dozens of examples of /ə/ in every bit of English you listen to. In the second case, it is often useful to think of leaving out the vowel altogether in words such as kændem *condemn*, sætədi *Saturday*, dʒentlmən *gentleman*, where /ə/ comes between consonants. Of course, you will not really leave out the vowel, but you will have a minimum vowel and that is what /ə/ is. Then in initial position, as in ətempt *attempt*, əkaunt *account*, əbzɜ:v *observe*, you must again keep it very short and very obscure. But in final position it need not be so short and it may be more like /ʌ/, with the mouth a little more open than in other positions.

Try the following examples:

#### In medial position



pəhæps	perhaps	kəntein	contain
entətein	entertain	ɪmbærəs	embarrass
dɪnəz	dinners	hɪndəd	hindered
æmətɜ:	amateur	glæməɜ:s	glamorous
kʌmfətəbl	comfortable	kəmpəʊnənt	component
ɪgnərənt	ignorant	kærəktɜz	characters
ʌndəstænd	understand	menəs	menace
pɑɪlət	pilot	terəbl	terrible
pɜ:mənənt	permanent	kəreɪdʒəs	courageous

#### In initial position



əbei	obey	ətend	attend
əlaʊ	allow	əbstrʌkt	obstruct
əmaʊnt	amount	ətʃi:v	achieve
ədɔ:	adore	əkaʊnt	account
ənɔɪ	annoy	əsɑɪd	aside
əpru:v	approve	əgri:	agree

## Vowels

əpɪə appear  
əfens offence

ədʒɜ:n adjourn

In final position



su:nə sooner  
meʒə measure  
sʌlfə sulphur  
æfrɪkə Africa  
pɜ:ʃə Persia  
flætərə flatterer  
kʌlə colour  
pɪktʃə picture  
mɜ:dərə murderer

seɪlə sailor  
kɒlə collar  
ʃəʊfə chauffeur  
əmerɪkə America  
kænədə Canada  
ədmaɪərə admirer  
zefə zephyr  
tʃaɪnə China  
kəmpəʊzə composer

More examples of /ə/ will be found in the next chapter when we consider the *weak forms* of certain words, such as *at* and *for* in *ət taɪmz at times* and *fə ju: for you*.

## 5.2 Diphthongs

A diphthong is a glide from one vowel to another, and the whole glide acts like one of the long, simple vowels; so we have *bi:*, *bɜ:*, *bɔ:* and also *beɪ*, *bəʊ*, *baɪ*, *baʊ*, *bɔɪ*, *bɪə*, *beə*, *bʊə*. The diphthongs of English are in three groups: those which end in /ʊ/, /əʊ, aʊ/, those which end in /ɪ/, /eɪ, aɪ, ɔɪ/, and those which end in /ə/, /ɪə, eə, ʊə/.

/əʊ, aʊ/

Both these diphthongs end with /ʊ/ rather than /u:/ although you will not be misunderstood if you do use /u:/. To get /əʊ/ as in *səʊ so*, start with /sɜ:/ and then glide away to /ʊ/ with the lips getting slightly rounded and the sound becoming less loud as the glide progresses. Be sure that the first part of the diphthong is /ɜ:/ (a real English /ɜ:/!) and not /ɔ:/ or anything like it, and be sure that the sound is a diphthong, not a simple vowel of the /ɔ:/ type. /əʊ/ and /ɔ:/ must be kept quite separate. Try the following:



ləʊ low	lɔ: law	səʊ so	sɔ: saw
snəʊ snow	snɔ: snore	bəʊt boat	bɔ:t bought
kləʊz close	klɔ:z claws	kəʊk coke	kɔ:k cork
kəʊl coal	kɔ:l call		

## Diphthongs

For /aʊ/ start with /ʌ/. Say *tʌn ton*, and then after the /ʌ/-sound add an /ʊ/; this should give *taʊn town*. /aʊ/ is not difficult for most people. Be sure that /aʊ/ and /əʊ/ are different. Try the following:



naʊ now	nəʊ know
laʊd loud	ləʊd load
fəʊnd found	fəʊnd phoned
raʊ row (quarrel)	rəʊ row (line)
dəʊt doubt	dəʊt dote
taʊnz towns	təʊnz tones

Remember when you practise these examples that diphthongs are shorter before strong consonants and longer before weak ones, just like the other vowels, so *bəʊt boat* has a shorter diphthong than *kləʊz close* and *dəʊt doubt* a shorter one than *laʊd loud*. Go back over all those examples and get the lengths right. When no consonant follows, as in *ləʊ low*, the diphthong is at its longest.

/eɪ, aɪ, ɔɪ/

These diphthongs all end in /ɪ/, not /i:/ (though it is not serious if you do use /i:/ finally). /eɪ/ begins with /e/ as in *men*. Say *men* and then add /ɪ/ after /e/, gliding smoothly from /e/ to /ɪ/ and making the sound less loud as the glide progresses – this will give *meɪn main*. The most common mistake is to use a long, simple vowel, so try to be sure that there is a glide from /e/ to /ɪ/; however, if you do use a simple vowel for /eɪ/ it will not be misunderstood – some accents of English (e.g. Scottish) do the same. But /eɪ/ and /e/ must be quite separate. Try the following:



leɪt late	let let	seɪl sail	seɪl sell
peɪpə paper	peɪpə pepper	treɪd trade	treɪd tread
reɪk rake	rek wreck	feɪl fail	feɪl fell

/aɪ/ glides from /ʌ/ to /ɪ/, and the loudness becomes less as the glide progresses. Say *fʌn fun*, and then add /ɪ/ after the /ʌ/, with a smooth glide; this will give you *fʌɪn fine*. Be sure that /aɪ/ is separate from /eɪ/:



waɪt white	weɪt wait	laɪd lied	leɪd laid
raɪs rice	reɪs race	raɪz rise	reɪz raise
laɪk like	leɪk lake	faɪl file	feɪl fail

/ɔɪ/ glides from /ɔ:/ to /ɪ/, and as usual the loudness becomes less during

the glide. Say **dʒɔ:** *jaw* and then add /ɪ/, as before. This will give you /dʒɔɪ/ *joy*. The /ɔ:/ sound is not as long in /ɔɪ/ as it is when it is alone, as in /dʒɔ:/. /ɔɪ/ is not a very common diphthong and it is not likely to be confused with any other vowel or diphthong. Try these words:



<b>ɔɪ</b> boy	<b>ɔɪ</b> toy	<b>ə</b> noɪ annoy	<b>noɪ</b> noise
<b>ɔɪ</b> oil	<b>dʒɔɪn</b> join	<b>ə</b> vɔɪd avoid	<b>boɪ</b> ls boils
<b>vɔɪ</b> s voice	<b>hɔɪ</b> st hoist	<b>dʒɔɪ</b> nt joint	<b>lɔɪ</b> tə loiter

/ɪə, eə, ʊə/

These are all glides to the sort of /ə/-sound found in final position, as described on p. 83. /ɪə/ glides from /ɪ/ (not /i:/) to this /ə/ in words like **hɪə** *hear*, **nɪə** *near*, etc. If you do use /i:/ at the beginning of the glide it will sound a bit strange but you will not be misunderstood. Try the following:



<b>ɪə</b> ear	<b>jɪə</b> year	<b>bɪə</b> beer	<b>klɪə</b> clear
<b>fɪə</b> fear	<b>rɪəl</b> real	<b>bɪəd</b> beard	<b>aɪdɪə</b> ideas
<b>kæ</b> rɪən Korean	<b>fɪəs</b> fierce	<b>pɪəs</b> pierce	<b>nɪə</b> rə nearer
<b>rɪəl</b> i really			

Words such as **fʌ**nɪə *funnier* and **glɔ:**rɪəs *glorious*, where /ɪə/ is the result of adding an ending /ə/ or /əs/ to a word which ends with /ɪ/, should be pronounced in the same way as the /ɪə/ in *hear*, *near*, etc. The same is true for words such as **ɪ**ndɪə *India*, **eə**rɪə *area*, **ju:**nɪən *union*, etc.

To make /eə/, start with the word **hæ**z *has* (with the proper English /æ/, between /e/ and /ʌ/) and then add /ʌ/ after the /æ/, gliding smoothly from /æ/ to /ʌ/; this will give you the word **heə**z *hairs*.

Notice that the beginning of the diphthong is /æ/ rather than /e/. You must keep /ɪə/ and /eə/ quite separate; try the following:



<b>hɪə</b> here	<b>heə</b> hair	<b>bɪə</b> beer	<b>beə</b> bare
<b>stɪəd</b> steered	<b>steəd</b> stared	<b>ɪə</b> z ears	<b>eə</b> z airs
<b>rɪəl</b> i really	<b>reəl</b> i rarely	<b>wɪə</b> rɪ weary	<b>weə</b> rɪ wary

/ʊə/ starts from /ʊ/ (not /u:/) and glides to /ə/; if you use /u:/ at the beginning of the glide it will sound a bit strange but you will not be misunderstood. Try the following:



<b>pʊə</b> poor	<b>ɪ</b> nʃʊərəns insurance
<b>ʃʊəl</b> i surely	<b>kjʊə</b> rɪəsətɪ curiosity
<b>fjʊə</b> rɪəs furious	<b>kjʊə</b> cure

<b>pjʊə</b> pure
<b>ʃʊə</b> sure

<b>tʊə</b> rɪst tourist
<b>pjʊəl</b> i purely

All these words may also be pronounced with /ɔ:/ instead of /ʊə/ in R.P., /pɔ:, ʃɔ:, kjɔ:/, etc. Other words, like *fewer*, *bluer*, *continuous*, are also usually pronounced with /ʊə/ **fjʊə**, **blʊə**, **kə**ntɪnʃʊəs though they can always be pronounced with /u:ə/ **fju:ə**, **blu:ə**, **kə**ntɪnʃu:əs – and in any case they must not be pronounced with /ɔ:/. This is also true for *cruel* and *jewel* which must have either /ʊə/ or /u:ə/.

### 5.3 Vowel sequences

There are vowel sequences as well as consonant sequences but they are not so difficult. In general, when one vowel (or diphthong) follows another you should pronounce each one quite normally but with a smooth glide between them. The most common sequences are formed by adding /ə/ to a diphthong, especially to /aɪ/ and /aʊ/ in words like **fə**ɪə *fire* and **aʊə** *our*. When you listen to these two sequences **/aɪə, aʊə/** you will notice that the /ɪ/ in *fire* and the /ʊ/ in *our* are rather weak; in fact both sequences may sound rather like /ɑ:/. It is probably best for you not to imitate this but to pronounce the sequences as /aɪ+ə/ and /aʊ+ə/, though the /ɪ/ and the /ʊ/ should not be made too strong. Try the following:



<b>tə</b> ɪə tyre	<b>tə</b> ʊə tower
<b>trə</b> ɪəl trial	<b>trə</b> ʊəl trowel
<b>kwaɪ</b> ət quiet	<b>tə</b> ɪəd tired
<b>kə</b> ʊəd coward	<b>pə</b> ʊəfʊl powerful
<b>bə</b> ɪə buyer	<b>bə</b> ʊə bower
<b>fɪ</b> ə flyer	<b>fɪ</b> əʊə flower
<b>aɪ</b> ən iron	<b>rə</b> ɪət riot
<b>aʊə</b> z ours	<b>ʃə</b> ʊərɪ showery

The less common sequences /eɪə, əʊə, ɔɪə/ should be pronounced with the normal diphthong smoothly followed by /ə/. The /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ need not be weakened at all. Try:



<b>grɪ</b> ə greyer	<b>ɪ</b> mplɔɪə employer
<b>grə</b> ʊə grower	<b>θrə</b> ʊə thrower
<b>pleɪ</b> ə player	<b>bɪ</b> trɪəl betrayal
<b>rɔɪ</b> əl royal	<b>lɔɪ</b> əz lawyers
<b>fɒ</b> ləʊəz followers	

/i:/ and /u:/ are also followed by /ə/ in words like *freer* and *bluer* which may be pronounced *fri:ə* or *friə*, and *blu:ə* or *bluə*, as we have seen.

The verb ending *-ing* /ɪŋ/ gives various sequences in words like the following:



bi:ɪŋ	being	si:ɪŋ	seeing
du:ɪŋ	doing	stju:ɪŋ	stewing
əlaʊɪŋ	allowing	baʊɪŋ	bowing
drɔ:ɪŋ	drawing	sɔ:ɪŋ	sawing
gəʊɪŋ	going	nəʊɪŋ	knowing

In words like *saying*, *enjoying*, *flying*, where *-ing* follows a word ending with /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/ or /aɪ/, it is common to pronounce *seɪŋ*, *ɪndʒɔɪŋ*, *flaɪŋ*, if you find this easier.

In words like *carrying*, *pitying*, etc., where a word which ends with /ɪ/ has /ɪŋ/ added to it, it is usual (and best for you) to pronounce *kæri:ɪŋ*, *pɪti:ɪŋ*, etc., although *kæri* and *pɪti* are the normal forms.

Other vowel sequences are found both within words and between words. These also should be performed with a smooth glide between the vowels. (See also p. 101.) Here are some examples:



keɪps	chaos	rʊɪn	ruin
bɒnd	beyond	rɪækt	react
blu:ɪʃ	bluish	ɡreɪ aɪd	grey-eyed
ði: end	the end	maɪ əʊn	my own

baɪɒɡrəfi biography  
 kəʊɒpəreɪt co-operate  
 ju: ɑ:nt you aren't  
 ɡəʊ aʊt go out

tu: aʊəz two hours  
 meɪ aɪ əʊ ɪt tu: ju: may I owe it to you?

## 5.4 Exercises

(Answers, where appropriate, on p. 135)

- 1 What vowels and diphthongs do you have in your language? Which of the English ones cause you difficulty?
- 2 During your listening-time listen carefully to one of the difficult vowels at a time and try to get the sound of it into your head. Make a list of twenty words containing each difficult vowel and practise them.

- 3 Go back and practise all the examples given in this chapter, and concentrate on making *differences* between the different vowels.
- 4 Is the length of vowels important in your language? Practise making the difference between the long vowels (including the diphthongs) and the short vowels of English. Don't forget that vowel length is affected by following strong and weak consonants; complete the following list for all the vowels and practise it, thinking about vowel length:
 

bi:d	bi:t
hɪz	hɪs
sed	set
- 5 Make a list of phrases like the ones on p. 88, where a vowel or diphthong at the end of one word is immediately followed by another at the beginning of the next. Practise saying them smoothly, with no break between the vowels.

## 6 Words in company

### 6.1 Word groups and stress




When we talk we do not talk in single words but in groups of words spoken continuously, with no break or pause; we may pause after a group, but not during it. These groups may be long, for example, *However did you manage to do it so neatly and tidily?*, or they may be short, as when we say simply *Yes* or *No*, or they may be of intermediate length, like *How did you do it?* or *Come over here a minute*. When we have longer things to say we break them up into manageable groups like this: *Last Wednesday I wanted to get up to London early so I caught a train about half an hour before my usual one and I got to work about half past eight*.

When one group is very closely connected grammatically to the next, there is a very slight pause, marked by ( ). When two groups are not so closely connected, there is a longer pause, marked by ( ), and this double bar is also used to mark the end of a complete utterance. It is not usually difficult to see how a long utterance can be broken up into shorter groups, but when you listen to English notice how the speakers do it both in reading and in conversation.

In the group *I could hardly believe my eyes* the words *hardly*, *believe* and *eyes* are stressed: this means that one of the syllables of the word (the only syllable in *eyes*!) is said with greater force, with greater effort, than the others; in *hardly* it is the first syllable /hɑ:d-/ , and in *believe* it is the second syllable /li:v/. All the remaining syllables in the group are said more weakly, they are *unstressed*; only /hɑ:d-/ , /-li:v/ and /aɪz/ have the extra effort or *stress*. We can show this by placing the mark \* immediately before the syllables which have stress, for example:

 aɪ kʊd \*hɑ:dli bɪ\*li:v maɪ \*aɪz

*Hardly* always has stress on the first syllable, never on the second, and *believe* always has stress on the second syllable, never on the first; every English word has a definite place for the stress and we are not allowed


   to change it. The first syllable is the most common place for the stress, as in *father*, *any*, *steadily*, *gathering*, *excellently*, *obstinacy*, *reasonableness*; many words are stressed on the second syllable, like *about*, *before*, *attractive*, *beginning*, *intelligent*, *magnificently*. Some words have two stressed syllables, for example, *fourteen* \*fɔ:\*ti:n, *half-hearted* \*hɑ:f \*hɑ:tid, *disbelieve* \*dɪsbɪ\*li:v, *contradiction* \*kɒntrə\*dɪkʃən, *qualification* \*kwɒlɪfɪ\*keɪʃən, *examination* ɪg\*zæmɪ\*neɪʃən, *terrified* \*terɪ\*fəɪd, *indicate* \*ɪndɪ\*kert.

### 6.2 Stressed and unstressed syllables

There is no simple way of knowing which syllable or syllables in an English word must be stressed, but every time you learn another word you must be sure to learn how it is stressed: any good dictionary of English will give you this information. If you stress the wrong syllable it spoils the shape of the word for an English hearer and he may have difficulty in recognizing the word.

As we saw in the group *I could hardly believe my eyes* not all words are stressed; *I* and *could* and *my* are unstressed. What sort of words are stressed, then, and what sort are unstressed? First, all words of more than one syllable are stressed. In some circumstances English speakers do not stress such words, but it is always possible to stress them and you should do so. Next, words of one syllable are generally *not* stressed if they are purely grammatical words like pronouns (*I*, *me*, *you*, *he*, *she*, etc.), prepositions (*to*, *for*, *at*, *from*, *by*, etc.), articles (*the*, *a*, *an*, *some*). Other words are stressed, for example, full verbs (*eat*, *love*, *take*, *try*, etc.), nouns (*head*, *chair*, *book*, *pen*, etc.), adjectives (*good*, *blue*, *long*, *cold*, etc.), adverbs (*well*, *just*, *quite*, *not*) and the like. In general it is the picture words which are stressed, the words which give us the picture or provide most of the information. We shall see later that for special purposes it is possible to stress any English word, even the purely grammatical ones, but usually they are unstressed.

Syllables which are not stressed often contain the vowel /ə/ instead of any clearer vowel, and this vowel /ə/ only occurs in unstressed syllables, *never* in stressed ones. For instance, in all the examples on p. 83 the /ə/ is in an unstressed syllable. In the word *contain* kən\*teɪn the second syllable is stressed and the first has /ə/, but in the noun *contents* \*kɒntents the first syllable is stressed and has the clearer vowel /ɒ/. Here are some examples of the same kind; say them with the effort on the correct syllable and with the right vowels:

 əb\*teɪn      obtain      \*ɒbdʒɪkt      object (n.)



pə*mit	permit (v.)	*pə:fɪkt	perfect (adj.)
prə*vaɪd	provide	*prəʊgres	progress (n.)
*fəʊtə*grɑ:f	photograph	fə*tɒgrəfi	photography
prɪ*peə	prepare	*prepə*reɪʃən	preparation
kəm*bain	combine (v.)	*kɒmbɪ*neɪʃən	combination
*kɒnvənt	convent	ɪn*vent	invent

But it is not true, as you can see, that /ə/ is the only vowel which occurs in unstressed syllables; all the other vowels can occur there too and /ɪ/ is commonly found there, the remaining vowels less commonly so. Here are examples of other vowels in unstressed syllables; say them as before:

*plɛntɪ	plenty	*enɪθɪŋ	anything
*hɪkəp	hiccough	ju:*tɪlɪtɪ	utility
*θæŋkjʊ	thank you	*wɪndəʊ	window
trænz*leɪt	translate	meɪn*teɪn	maintain
dɪ*sɑ:d	decide	vəɪ*breɪt	vibrate
ɔ:*spɪʃəs	auspicious	*gæɪrɑ:ʒ	garage

### 6.3 Weak forms of words

In *It was too expensive for them to buy the words too, expensive and buy* are stressed, giving *ɪt wəz \*tu: ɪk\*spensɪv fə ðəm tə \*baɪ*. Notice the pronunciation of the words *was, for, them and to*; all of them have the vowel /ə/. If those words are pronounced alone, they have the pronunciations *wɒz, fɔ:, ðem* and *tu:*, but usually they are not pronounced alone and usually they are not stressed, and then the forms with /ə/ are used; we call these the *weak forms* of those words.

English people often think that when they use these weak forms they are being rather careless in their speech and believe that it would be more correct always to use the strong forms, like *wɒz, tu:*, etc. This is not true, and English spoken with only strong forms sounds wrong. The use of weak forms is an essential part of English speech and you must learn to use the weak forms of 35 English words if you want your English to *sound* English. Some words have more than one weak form and the following list tells you when to use one and when the other:

Word	Weak form	Examples
and	ən	*blæk ən *waɪt
as	əz	əz *gʊd əz *gəʊld
but	bət	bət *waɪ *nɒt?

than	ðən	*betə ðən *evə
that	ðæt	ər əd *mɪt ðæt ər *dɪd ɪt
	(The word <i>that</i> in phrases like <i>that man, that's good</i> is always pronounced <i>ðæt</i> and <i>never</i> weakened.)	
he	i:	*dɪd i: *wɪn?
him	ɪm	*grɪv ɪm *tu:
his	ɪz	ər *laɪk ɪz *taɪ
her	ɜ:	*teɪk ɜ: *həʊm
	(At the beginning of word groups the forms <i>hi:, him, hɪz, hɜ:</i> should be used: <i>h: *laɪks ɪt, hɜ: *feɪs ɪz *red</i> )	
them	ðəm	*send ðəm baɪ *pəʊst
us	s (only in <i>let's</i> )	*lets *du: ɪt *naʊ
	əs	hi: *wəʊnt *let əs *du: ɪt
do	də	*haʊ də ðeɪ *nəʊ?
	( <i>də</i> is only used before consonants. Before vowels, use the strong form <i>du:</i> : <i>*haʊ du: *aɪ *nəʊ?</i> )	
does	dəz	*wen dəz ðə *treɪn *li:v?
am	m (after <i>I</i> )	ər m *taɪəd.
	əm (elsewhere)	*wen əm ər tə *bi: *ðeə?
are	ə (before consonants)	ðə *gɜ:lz ə *bjʊ:təf]
	ər (before vowels)	ðə *men ər *ʌglɪ
be	bɪ	*dəʊnt bɪ *ru:d
is	s (after /p, t, k, f, θ/)	*ðæt s *faɪn
	z (after vowels and voiced consonants except /z, ʒ, dʒ/)	*weə z *dʒɒn?
	(After /s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ/ the strong form <i>ɪz</i> is always used: <i>*waɪt ɪz *raɪt?</i> )	*dʒɒn z *hɪə
was	wəz	ðə *weðə wəz *teɪəb]
has	əz (after /s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ/)	ðə *pleɪs əz *teɪndʒd
	s (after /p, t, k, f, θ/)	*dʒæk s *gɒn
	z (elsewhere)	*dʒɒn z bi:n *sɪk
have	v (after <i>I, we, you, they</i> )	ju: v *brəʊkən ɪt
	əv (elsewhere)	ðə *men əv *gɒn

had	d (after <i>I, he, she, we, you, they</i> ) əd (elsewhere) (At the beginning of word groups the forms hæz, hæv, hæd should be used: hæz *enɪwʌn *fəʊnd? When <i>has, have, had</i> are full verbs they should always be pronounced hæz, hæv, hæd: aɪ hæv *tu: *brʌðəz)	ðeɪd *left *həʊm ðə *deɪ əd bi:n *faɪn
can	kən	*haʊ kən aɪ *help?
shall	ʃl	aɪ ʃl bi *krʊs
will	l (after <i>I, he, she, we, you, they</i> ) l (after consonants, except /l/) əl (after vowels and /l/)	ðeɪ l *gɪv ɪt ə *weɪ *ðɪs l *du:  ðə *bɔɪ əl *lu:z ən ðə *gɜ:l əl *wɪn *aɪ d *du: ɪt *dʒɒn əd *du: ɪt aɪ məst *tel ɪm ə *paʊnd ə *deɪ *hæv ən *æpl ðə *mɔ: ðə *merɪə
would	d (after <i>I, he, she, we, you, they</i> ) əd (elsewhere)	
must	məst a ə (before consonants) ən (before vowels) the ðə (before consonants) (Before vowels the strong form ði: should be used: ði: *ɑ:nts ən ði: *ʌŋk{l}z)	
some	səm (When <i>some</i> means 'a certain quantity' it is always stressed and therefore pronounced sʌm: *sʌm əv maɪ *frendz)	aɪ *ni:d səm *peɪpə
at	ət	*kʌm ət *wʌns
for	fə (before consonants) fər (before vowels)	*kʌm fə *ti: *kʌm fər ə *mi:l
from	frəm	aɪ *sent ɪt frəm *lʌndən
of	əv	ðə *kwɪ:n əv *ɪŋɡlənd
to	tə (before consonants) (Before vowels the strong form tu: should be used: aɪ *wɒntɪd tu: *ɑ:sk ju:)	tə *steɪ ɔ: tə *gəʊ



The word *not* has the weak forms /nt/ (after vowels) and /nt/ (after consonants) when it follows *are, is, should, would, has, have, could, dare, might*. Examples: ðeɪ \*ɑ:nt \*kʌmɪŋ; hi: \*hæznt ə \*raɪvd. Notice especially the forms *can't* kɑ:nt, *shan't* ʃɑ:nt, *don't* dəʊnt, *won't* wəʊnt, *mustn't* mʌsnt, in which *can, shall, do, will, must* are changed when they combine with *not*. Practise all the examples given here and be sure that the weak forms are really weak, then make up similar examples for yourself and practise those too.

#### 6.4 The use of strong forms

As I have said, the 35 common words which have weak forms also have strong forms, which *must* be used in the following cases.



1 Whenever the word is stressed, as it may be: \*kæn aɪ?, \*du: ðeɪ?, \*hæv ju: \*fɪnɪʃt?, ju: məst \*tʃu:z \*ʌs ɔ: \*ðem, \*hi: \*laɪks \*hɜ: bæt dɜz \*ʃi: \*laɪk \*hɪm?



2 Whenever the word is *final* in the group: \*dʒɒn hæz, \*meərɪ wɪl, \*ju: ɑ:, aɪ \*dəʊnt \*wɒnt tu:, \*wɒts \*ðæt fɔ:?



Exceptions: *he, him, his, her, them, us* have their *weak* forms in final position (unless they are stressed of course): aɪ \*təʊld ɜ:, ʃi: \*laɪks ðəm, wɪ: \*kɔ:ld fər ɪm, ðeɪ \*lɑ:ft ət əs.

*not* has its weak form finally when attached to *can, have, is, etc.*: \*dʒɒn \*kɑ:nt, \*meərɪ \*ɪznt; but never otherwise: aɪ \*həʊp nɒt.

Some of the 35 words are very rarely either stressed or final in the group and so very rarely have their strong form, for example, *than, a, the*. But occasionally they are stressed for reasons of meaning and then they naturally have their strong form: aɪ sed \*eɪ \*sʌn, \*nɒt \*ði: \*sʌn (I said *a* son, not *the* sun).



Practise all these examples and then make up others for yourself and practise those too.

#### 6.5 Rhythm units



Within the word group there is at least one stressed syllable (||\*wen?|| ||\*su:n \*naʊ? \*jes ). The length of the syllable in a very short 'group' of this kind depends on the natural length of the vowel and the following consonant(s), if any.

/naʊ/ is a very long syllable because it has a diphthong and no following consonant – we stretch it out.

/su:n/ is also very long because it has a long vowel followed by a weak consonant.